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Modern Self-Portraits: The Self in the Age of Artistic Autonomy

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Maria Lassnig painting in her studio in Vienna, 1983. https://magazine.artland.com/lost-and-found-maria-lassnig/

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Introduction

Who am I? Artists have turned towards self-portraiture to explore this question for centuries. Self-portraits, which will be defined as a representation of the artist by the artist, offer the viewer a chance to see artists as they saw themselves. At the end of the nineteenth century, artists had more freedom than ever to engage with self-portraiture. From its conception in Medieval times, self-portraiture was often considered a sub-genre of portraiture. Until the advent of photography in the mid-nineteenth century, artists relied on mirrors to capture their image. Artists would often keep self-portraits in their studios to demonstrate their skill to potential patrons. With few exceptions, notably the Dutch artist Rembrandt, most artists experimented with self-portraiture once or twice throughout their career. Over the span of his career, Rembrandt created innovative self-portraits that are deeply revealing of his psychological state and suggestive of a complex inner life. Many modern artists, such as Vincent van Gogh, cited Rembrandt as an important influence. Rembrandt was a role model for different reasons, but perhaps most saliently, because he played by his own rules.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Europe was changing as the ideas and feeling of modernism began to take hold across the continent and spread to different parts of the globe. A newfound primacy of the individual began to assert itself in different realms of Western culture. Old systems of patronage were disintegrating, replaced by a new moneyed class that emerged with the industrialization of Europe. Modernism was anything but singular and took shape in different modes across literature, art, music, theater, and dance. Although divergent in their vision, modern artists were united in a shared desire for artistic autonomy. Rather than accepting the ways of the past and following rigid guidelines, modern artists turned to themselves and the world around them for inspiration. In the essay "The Painter of Modern Life" Baudelaire coined the term *modernity,* writing that the task of the modern painter is to recreate their world in their art.[1] In self-portraiture, artists accomplished this by creating their own formal rules and incorporating their own subjectivity.

A spirit of artistic freedom placed the artist at the center of their own artistic decisions. This new-found autonomy brought about a commitment to introspection in order to define their artistic path. In modernity, self-portraiture became a genre that artists would work revisit many times throughout their life. With a greater sense of self-consciousness, modern artists approached

self-portraiture by examining both who they were and how they imagined themselves. The tension between revealing oneself and creating oneself in self-portraiture is a theme that is constantly in play. The first contributing factor to this tension is the struggle to truly know oneself. As the mediator of the image, the artist cannot truly reveal oneself in their self-portrait if they cannot first arrive at a firm sense of self. Unintentionally, or even unconsciously, artists may leave clues about their identity that are more revealing than those that they leave purposely. Further contributing to this tension is the opportunity to reimagine oneself in self-portraits. This notion truly posits the artist at the locus of their own artistic decisions in that they become the creator of their own identity. A fundamental urge of human beings is to know oneself. As creatures who are always changing, it is hard to pin down exactly what it is that makes someone who they are from one day to the next. There is a tension between the notion of the unified self and the seeming flexibility of identity we experience in our daily lives. In this new era of individuality, it became more relevant than ever for artists ask the question "Who am I?"

This project will aim to examine modern self-portraits with a few important questions in mind. Despite each artist working according to their own vision, are there shared qualities that can be deduced between modern artists and their self-portraits? Who were the viewers of these self-portraits, and if there is an intended audience, what is the artist communicating about him or herself? What can these self-portraits tell us about identity? What can these self-portraits tell us about the broader social and cultural framework?

The first chapter will examine those artists who turn inward when answer the question "Who am I?". Breaking with conventions of naturalism, Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Edvard Munch all created self-portraits characterized by subjectivity and formal experimentation. The exploration of the inner, emotional self in art first occurred in Romanticism during the nineteenth century. At the fin de siècle, artists looked towards Romanticism and furthered its mission of subjectivity. Incorporating their imagination or their emotions into their works, these artists created a highly inventive group of self-portraits. Although taking varied approaches, this group broke with traditions in favor of a new mode of expression. With each self-portrait, another aspect of the individual emerges, demonstrating the complexity of the self.

The second chapter will consider the emergence of the nude self-portrait and its development in the twentieth century. Newfound artistic freedom and shifting cultural attitudes towards the human body and sexuality account for the emergence of this sub-genre in self-

portraiture. Egon Schiele, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Frida Kahlo, Maria Lassnig, Alice Neel, and Lucian Freud are considered for their unique approaches to exploring aspects of their identity through their body self-portraiture.

The third and final chapter will explore how questions of identity are represented in self-portraits. The dual nature of identity as both an individual and social phenomenon will be considered in depth. The construction of personal identity as well as responses to issues of gender, culture, class, and race, will be examined in the self-portraits of James Ensor, Pablo Picasso, Claude Cahun, Frida Kahlo, and Adrian Piper.

Self-portraits, defined as representations of the artist by the artist, can be interpreted to extend to almost all works of art. There are many interesting works of art that could be considered a self-portrait to some degree or may even be more representative of an artist than those works studied in the following paper. For the sake of the project at hand, the scope has been set to only consider those self-portraits which actually depict the artist. Artists use self-portraits to experiment with their style and vision, often resulting in highly innovative and vanguard works of art. There has been a great deal of scholarly consideration given to modern portraiture, but limited work on modern self-portraits, which deserves a study in its own right. These works are at the forefront of engaging issues of identity, the body, and the subjective self that have become central topics of Western culture throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

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1 Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays,* trans. Jonathan Mayne (Phaidon Press, 1964), 120.

Photograph of Paul Gauguin, *ArtStor*
https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000747301

Chapter One

In the late 19th century, artists were experimenting with new formal techniques that went against the regimented rules of naturalism taught in academic settings. In self-portraiture, artists challenged themselves to create a picture that went beyond capturing their image as strictly a mirror-reflection. The question "Who am I?" has always been a fundamental question of self-portraiture. Free from academies and traditional systems of patronage, artists had the freedom to define their own formal logic and style. Driven by different goals and visions, modern artists incorporated aspects such as their emotion, soul, and imagination appear in their self-portraits. By incorporating their own subjectivity, artists destroyed the conventions of the past in favor of advancing new. In this chapter, self-portraits by Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Edvard Munch will be considered, and careful attention will be given to their different approaches to self-portraiture. Working in the wake of the Impressionists, these artists were among the first to create self-portraits that were free of the tendencies of naturalism. While their self-portraits were revolutionary, these artists still operated with an awareness of history. In each of self-portrait, a new aspect of the artist arises, and with each complexity, personal identity appears as anything but simple or singular.

The life of Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) has come to be known through his extensive letters and notebooks. These sources reveal Van Gogh to be deeply passionate and singularly driven to achieve his artistic vision. In a letter to the Dutch painter Anthon van Rappard from 1855, Van Gogh wrote, "I want to paint what I feel and feel what I paint."[1] As windows to his thoughts and feelings, this quote speaks to the importance of Van Gogh's notebooks and letters for the interpretation of his art. The correspondences that Van Gogh exchanged with his brother Theo, his sister Wil, and fellow artists such as Paul Gauguin are incredibly descriptive, elucidating details from his personal life and theories on art. His engagement with literature, history, and theory reveal Van Gogh to be a man of intellect and many interests. Having painted around 41 self-portraits in his lifetime, Van Gogh has become a point of reference for self-portraitists in later generations.[2]

Van Gogh decided to become a painter at the age 27 after a series of unsatisfactory careers. The oldest of six, Van Gogh shared a special bond with his younger brother Theo who supported him financially and emotionally throughout his career as an artist. During his early

years as a painter, Van Gogh favored the realist style, using a dark pattern to depict the working-class peasants of the Dutch countryside. In his early years as a painter, Van Gogh did not create self-portraits. However, this period characterized by careful observations of the world would influence his later paintings and self-portraits. Despite their fantastic colors and seeming abstractions, Van Gogh's paintings are always grounded in the observable world. In 1886 Van Gogh moved to join his brother Theo in Paris, which was the creative center of Europe and home to many influential members of the growing Avant-Garde. In Paris, Van Gogh was exposed to artists of the past such Eugène Delacroix and Rembrandt during visits to the Louvre.[3] In Paris, Van Gogh became acquainted with members of the Avant-Garde including Toulouse-Lautrec, Seurat, and the Symbolists.[4] These artists were creating works according to varying conceptions of what art should be and with different formal principles. Their approach to art making, especially the theories of color formulated by the Neo-Impressionists, caused lasting impacts on Van Gogh's style. The artists in Paris would exhibit together and share ideas, but were for the most part working towards different personal goals.[5] It is in Paris under this artistic climate that Van Gogh created his first series of self-portraits.

Van Gogh created *Self-Portrait* (1887) (Fig. 1) while in Paris after coming into contact with modern artists and the paintings of many Old Masters. While Van Gogh gave a detailed account of his physical features in this self-portrait, his palette features several unrealistic colors and a broken brush strokes that creates a visual drama. His method of applying color with tiny dots and individual strokes is reminiscent of the technique of Seurat. The clashing colors and expressive brushstrokes constitute Van Gogh's new formal vocabulary that he was developing in Paris. The sudden introduction of color into Van Gogh's paintings as displayed in *Self-Portrait* is likely a result of contact with leading members of the Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists in Paris.[6] Artists such as Seurat and Signac experimented with color to develop theories based on the science of optics and perception. Van Gogh made use of their principles concerning complementary colors, but did not subscribe wholeheartedly to their theories. In his paintings, including many self-portraits, Van Gogh intentionally placed side by side complementary colors such as orange and blue in order to mutually intensify one another.[7] Van Gogh's interest in these complex scientific theories as well as his engagement with other modernists in Paris speak to his interest in learning and practicing emerging techniques and ideas. In a letter to Theo from 1888, Van Gogh shared his admiration for the works by the Dutch master Rembrandt at the Louvre.[8] In

comparing Van Gogh's *Self-Portrait* to Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait* (1660) (Fig. 2) which hangs in the Louvre, both share an attention to expressing their inner life.

In December of 1887, Van Gogh painted another self-portrait titled *Self-Portrait at the Easel* (1887-88) (Fig. 3). In this painting, Van Gogh wields a handful of brushes and a palette in front of an easel much like Rembrandt in his self-portrait from 1660. In this self-portrait, the toned-down palette and Van Gogh's blank stare appear melancholic, perhaps representing suffrage from the ailments he described in his letter to his sister Wil from 1887. Van Gogh wrote, "The diseases from which we civilized people suffer most are melancholy and pessimism."[9] The new emotional state at play dramatically changes the effect of the work. Compared to the compositional techniques used in *Self-Portrait* from 1887, Van Gogh applied similar broken brushstrokes. These fine brushstrokes are reminiscent of the pointillist techniques used by Seurat, suggesting Van Gogh may have been experimenting with the style of the Neo-Impressionists when applying paint. Van Gogh soon abandons this style, but this flirtation with pointillism is demonstrative of his interest in experimenting with new techniques in search of a style that is uniquely his own.

In February of 1888, Van Gogh suddenly left Paris for Arles, a town situated in the Provence region of France.[10] Attracted to the splendid natural light and open environment, Van Gogh began to paint scenes of the landscape around Arles. In April of 1888 Van Gogh moved to the Yellow House to "breath, meditate, and paint."[11] Separated from Theo and the artistic society in Paris, Van Gogh conceived of the idea to found an artistic community in Arles. He decided to extend the invitation to various artists to join him in the Yellow House. In a letter to Émile Bernard from 1888, Van Gogh described in detail the favorable conditions for living and painting in the town in an effort to encourage an entire migration of artists to the south.[12] Eventually, one artist would join Van Gogh. After exchanging letters for several months, Gauguin agreed to take up residence in the Yellow House in Arles. In a letter to Theo from June of 1888, Van Gogh wrote, "If Gauguin were willing to join us it would be, I think, a step forward for us. It would establish us firmly as openers-up of the south, and no one could argue with that."[13] In the weeks before Gauguin's arrival, the two exchanged a pair of self-portraits.

In the fall of 1888 Van Gogh created *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Paul Gauguin* (Fig. 4) from the Yellow House. Van Gogh portrayed himself against a striking green background with a serious and stern expression. Explaining his appearance in a letter to Gauguin, Van Gogh stated,

"Not wishing to inflate my own personality, however, I aimed rather for the character of a bonze, a simple worshipper of the eternal Buddha."[14] In this letter, Van Gogh attempted to portray himself as austere, spiritual, and dedicated to his practice. The color of the background, mostly composed of Veronese-green, reflects back on Van Gogh's face, exaggerating the gaunt look of his sunken features.[15] Paint was applied in thick strokes onto the canvas, and with each one he constructed the shape of his head against the green background that appears to radiate from his skull. As complementary colors, Van Gogh's orange beard and warm coat pop against the background and blue trim. Quasi-religious and deeply expressive, in this self-portrait Van Gogh relayed his earnest desire to live in artistic brotherhood with Gauguin in the south and pursue their artistic visions together. In this self-portrait more so than in those from the past, Van Gogh pushed beyond the aesthetically familiar to outwardly express his inner ideas and emotions. *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Paul Gauguin* exemplified Van Gogh's new relationship to color as expressive and sculptural.

Gauguin responded to Van Gogh's painting by sending him a self-portrait as the character Jean Valjean from Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables.*[16] In contrast to Van Gogh's deeply emotive and revealing self-portrait, Gauguin's *Self-Portrait with Portrait of Émile Bernard (Les misérables)* (Fig. 5) was highly calculated. Aware of Van Gogh's outsider status, Gauguin portrayed himself as a character that was a tormented outcast and representative of unfair suffering.[17] Working in the vocabulary of Symbolism, Gauguin included a decorative pattern of flowers across the background of the canvas. In examining these two self-portraits, the stylistic differences and varied approaches to art making among the Post-Impressionists is visible. However, there are certain qualities that both self-portraits share. Gauguin and Van Gogh both recognize the communicative power inherent in their self-depiction. By portraying themselves as Jean Valjean and a Japanese Bonze, Van Gogh and Gauguin communicated to one another various aspects about their identities as artists. Although they had been exchanging ideas through letters, this self-portrait exchange provided an insight into each artist's personality and aspirations.

Gauguin arrived at the Yellow House in October of 1888.[18] Soon after Gauguin arrived, tension between the two artists developed. The source of their tension was that the two had diverging ideas of how one should make art, yet they were equally passionate in their convictions. While Van Gogh worked by looking at the physical world and reinterpreting it

through his own lens, Gauguin would often render scenes that were born in his imagination. The pair would often paint at the same location together but their final works would bear little resemblance to one another.[19] Letters exchanged between Van Gogh, Theo, Gauguin, and Émile Bernard reveal that their problematic living situation was growing worse. Gauguin finally left the Yellow House on December 23, 1888.[20] That same night, Van Gogh's ear was wounded from an act of self-mutilation. In the wake of this incident, Van Gogh executed two self-portraits.

Van Gogh painted both *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear* (Fig. 6) and *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear and Pipe* (Fig. 7) in January of 1889. In a letter to Theo sent in early January, Van Gogh described his wound as "healing very well".[21] In both self-portraits, Van Gogh wore the same green overcoat, blue winter cap, and crisp white bandage covering his ear. In *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear*, Van Gogh's used soft, muted colors to depict himself in his studio in front of a Japanese print and easel. In 1888, Van Gogh wrote a letter to Theo stating, "I want to do something in the manner of Japanese prints."[22] In this work, Van Gogh borrowed the compositional techniques of Japanese prints and flattened his composition, using color and thick outlines to indicate volume rather than by doing so with shade. In the note to Theo, Van Gogh praised the simplicity and clarity of expression that was accomplished with only a few brush strokes in Japanese art.[23] Rather than rendering his form with short, thin brush strokes like those used in *Self-Portrait Behind the Easel*, Van Gogh used a broader line more sparingly to create this self-portrait. The shift away from Neo-Impressionist tendencies towards a more substantial and expressive line was one of the key lasting developments in Van Gogh's self-portraits and overall style.

While *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear* is firmly situated in reality, *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear and Pipe* is placed against an abstract background. In *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear and Pipe,* Van Gogh used striking colors and a dizzying brushstroke to create an image that communicates distress and unease. Van Gogh's mastery of color that he developed through experimentation is visible in this work. His placement of complementary colors next to one another allow for them to be mutually intensifying. The red and orange background meet one another and form a horizontal line across the canvas. If continued, this line would cut through Van Gogh's bright green eyes. Furrowed, his eyes express panic or worry. Van Gogh's thick brush strokes splay out from his hat and give shape to the smoke from his pipe. This adds dizzying confusion and intensifies the emotive self-portrait. In both self-portraits made with his

ear bandaged, Van Gogh's eyes are a piercing green. In his letters, Van Gogh expressed the goal of portraiture to be the expression of the soul of the sitter.[24] If eyes are to be considered windows to the soul, Van Gogh's soul was ablaze. Taken as a pair, these paintings express two very different emotional states of the artist.

After continued difficulty with mental health, Van Gogh committed himself to an asylum in Saint-Rémy in April of 1889.[25] One of his final works, *Self-Portrait* (fig. 8) was made in September of 1889. For several weeks, Van Gogh was confined to the interior of the asylum. In this condition, Van Gogh painted constantly to cope with his situation, producing canvas after canvas. In a letter to his sister Wil, Van Gogh wrote, "It is only when I stand painting before my easel that I feel in any way alive."[26] In this self-portrait, Van Gogh applied thick strokes of paint to the canvas to sculpt his face and body with different colors and directions of the brush. His pale blue suit matches the imaginary background which both offset his orange hair. The swirls in the background take on the same organic form as those in his suit. These same swirls were present as smoke from *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear and Pipe* (1889) and in his recently executed landscape *Starry Night.* With eyes furrowed, lips colorless, and skin pale, Van Gogh's face appears ghostly, threatening to evaporate into the swirling background at any moment. Rather than using expressive color, Van Gogh's brushstroke in this work evokes a sense of emotional turmoil.

On July 29, 1890, Van Gogh died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound at age 37.[27] Leaving behind an incredible collection of drawings, paintings, and letters, Van Gogh's work would become highly influential for artists in the coming decades. His self-portraits go beyond a descriptive account of his physical appearance. Imbued with expressive color and line, they reflect his subjective point of view and give an account of his inner life. During his lifetime, very few of Van Gogh's works were exhibited and he was hardly known beyond artistic circles. With an audience that included Theo, Gauguin, and few others, Van Gogh's self-portraits were in general created for himself. This may account for their appearance as expressions of his true inner life and self-conception. With each self-portrait, another aspect about Van Gogh is revealed.

Although both prolific self-portraitists, Gauguin and Van Gogh had opposing artistic visions. Their distinctive approach to art making was previously elucidated in their pair of self-portraits that they exchanged in 1888 before Gauguin's arrival at the Yellow House. Unlike Van

Gogh who created works firmly in observations of the world, Gauguin's style more adamantly rejected naturalism. Viewing naturalism as 'an abominable error,' Gauguin searched for a new independent art of the imagination influenced by Symbolism.[28] Throughout his life, Gauguin was driven by the search for what he called the 'primitive,' which he believed offered an escape from the pain and alienation found in modern society.[29] Through his notes, diaries, and self-portraits, Gauguin presented himself as an artistic visionary revolutionizing modern art.[30] In accounts from his contemporaries, Gauguin was often described as highly self-confident.[31] Gauguin's ego, self-regard, and use of alter-egos brings into question the extent to which the artist projected a fictional version of himself onto the canvas.[32] This constructed sense of the self is unlike the relatively straightforward reflection of inner psychic life that Van Gogh seemed to present. Gauguin developed his style through a process of formal and spiritual experimentation, and his many self-portraits are unlike anything seen before in Western self-portraiture.

Like Van Gogh, Gauguin became a painter well into his adult life. In Paris in 1879, Gauguin began exhibiting with the Impressionists, only deciding to become an artist full-time in 1883 when he was 35.[33] Often regarded as a father-figure within the group, Camille Pissarro acted as Gauguin's mentor for several years. Often painting together, the two created a double-portrait (Fig. 9) in 1880, each drawing the other. Executed with a delicate line and naturalistic colors, Gauguin's portrait of Pissarro demonstrates a careful attention to the light as it falls over his figure. The influence of the Impressionists is further evident in one of Gauguin's earliest self-portraits.[34] In *Self-Portrait* (Fig. 10) from 1885, Gauguin is seen in front of his easel, bathed in light that is streaming in from an adjacent window. Working with Impressionist techniques, he carefully recorded the effects of light and applied his paint with a loose, broken brushstroke. Like many self-portraits by Van Gogh, this self-portrait is a subjective response to the objective world he sees in front of him. However, Gauguin rejects this way of making art shortly after this self-portrait is executed in favor for techniques based in the ideas of Symbolism.

Like Impressionism, Symbolism is difficult to define as a collective movement in light of distinctive, or even opposing, ideological positions held by individuals within the group.[35] Symbolism was not confined to the visual arts but rather developed consecutively across poetry, music, theater, dance, and prose. One year after Gauguin executed *Self-Portrait* (1885), Jean Moréas's Symbolist manifesto was published in the Paris-based magazine *Figaro Littéraire*.[36] In a response to the manifesto of 1886, the Symbolist poet and art critic Gustave Kahn wrote, "The

essential aim of our art is to objectify the subjective (the externalization of the Idea) instead of subjectifying the objective (nature seen through the eyes of a temperament)."[37] In the visual arts, symbolist works of art generally share the common features of flatness, reductiveness, decorativeness, and abstraction as well as a concern with dreams, vision, and the spiritual.

By 1888, Gauguin was incorporating the principles of Symbolism into his self-portraits. The influence of Symbolism can be seen in the aforementioned *Self-Portrait with Portrait of Émile Bernard (Les Misérables)* as well as in another self-portrait executed in the same year titled *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Carrière* (1888/89) (Fig. 11). Both of these self-portraits show Gauguin's style moving from Impressionistic tendencies to one less reliant on external observation. In *Self-Portrait with Émile Bernard* and in *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Carrière* the wall in the background is an invention of Gauguin's imagination. Both images appear flattened as a result wide bands of abstract color, and the line is given a more prominent role in forming shapes.

In many of his self-portraits, Paul Gauguin adopted various alter-egos and personas such as the character Jean Valjean in his *Self-Portrait with Portrait of Émile Bernard*. The function of adopting this persona was to communicate with Van Gogh a feeling of suffering and unfair victimization by society.[38] The themes of persecution and suffering were regularly revisited in Gauguin's art and were most often expressed by use of an alter-ego. This characterization would further position Gauguin as a recluse from society, an image that Gauguin cultivated intentionally for himself. In 1889 while living in Brittany, Gauguin conveyed his feelings of anguish by adopting the role of Christ in his self-portrait *Christ in the Garden of Olives* (1889) (Fig. 12). Taking on the appearance of Christ has its precedent in the history of self-portraiture, originating with Dürer in his *Self-Portrait in a Fur Coat* (Fig. 13) from 1500.[39] In this work, Dürer adopted the role of Christ and proclaimed the role of the artist as a divine creator.[40] In comparing these two motives, it can be noted that Gauguin took on the role of Christ to give expression to his feelings of suffering and persecution whereas Dürer's use of the image of Christ was to promote the role of the artist in society more broadly. Rather than placing himself against a nondescript background like Dürer, Gauguin imagined the landscape of the Mount of Olives and created this scene with vivid colors. The background of *Christ in the Garden of Olives* is reductive insofar as trees are indicated by lines suggesting their shape rather than a

depiction of individual details. This move towards abstraction and use of imagination were some of Gauguin's significant contributions to modern self-portraiture.

Many of Gauguin's self-portraits were motivated by his own self-mythologization and self-promotion. Gauguin was conscious of the competitive avant-garde when he was making his self-portraits, intentionally using them as a tool to construct an identity and assert his individuality within the group.[41] As he emerged as a prominent artist and leading figure of the Symbolist group, Gauguin began to proclaim and embrace a dual nature as half-civilized and half-savage.[42] This self-divide is reflective of Gauguin's constant search for the "primitive" in art, a certain ideal which Gauguin thought was not present in art of the modern world. Gauguin associated the primitive with the idea of both artistic regression to simplified forms and a personal regression to a child-like state.[43] Having lived for a several years in Peru as a child, Gauguin identified as both European and non-European, proclaiming in 1889 that he had, "Indian, Inca Blood."[44] Gauguin first searched for the primitive ideal in the small peasant town of Pont Aven in Brittany. The inhabitants of this village seemingly rejected the modern world of Paris and instead lived and labored according to past traditions. Strife with other artists living in the town, such as Émile Bernard, caused Gauguin to leave Brittany for Arles in 1888. His time with Van Gogh in Arles eventually ended similarly in a clashing of artistic vision and personality.

Refusing to be confined to painting, Gauguin experimented with sculpture using materials such as ceramics and wood. For Gauguin, these materials had a close connection with the primitive ideal for which he was searching. Gauguin recognized pottery as a primordial art form but believed that Sèvres porcelain ultimately spoiled the practice in the modern world.[45] Recalling ancient forms, Gauguin created a pair of self-portraits in enameled ceramic in 1889. *Self-Portrait Jar* (1889) (Fig. 14) features Gauguin's crumpled face with a long skinny arm that wraps around the jar. Bringing his finger to his mouth, Gauguin appears as a baby or even a fetus.[46] Both in material and in its childlike form, this self-portrait jar embodies Gauguin's idea of the primitive. Compared to other sculptural self-portraits, such as a 18th century self-portrait sculptures of Franz Xaver Messerschmidt (Fig. 15) that displays a similarly scrunched expression, Gauguin's sculpture adamantly rejects the polished, classical, and detailed approach to modeling which dates back to ancient Greek and Roman portrait busts. Gauguin revived sculptural self-portraiture with a new, rough type that rejects the Classical past.

From 1891-1893, Gauguin's search for the primitive led him to Tahiti.[47] This would be the first of two extensive voyages to the Pacific. When he returned to Paris, Gauguin exaggerated his split-identity even further, as demonstrated in his *Self-Portrait with Idol* (1893) (Fig. 16). In the painting, Gauguin presented his proclaimed dual nature as "half-civilized and half-savage." Wearing a Breton shirt, Gauguin claimed his European identity while the idol in the background asserts his non-European affinities. Upon his return to Paris, Gauguin exhibited many of his works from his time abroad at Durant-Ruel Gallery.[48] At the exhibition opening Gauguin continued to portray himself as exotic, evident by Ambroise Vollard comments on his appearance at the show. Vollard wrote, "With the haughty expression on his face, a fur cap on his head, a coat thrown over his shoulders, followed by a small Javanese girl dressed in luminous garments, one could have taken Gauguin for an oriental prince."[49] In *Self-Portrait with Idol*, Gauguin's gesture and facial expression are inquisitive and appear as though he is in a moment of reflection and scrutiny.[50] In order to produce his images, Gauguin often used a mirror. According to the Symbolist poet Mallarmé, the reflected image of the self is presented as an estranged Other that is in part oneself but in part another.[51] This theory presents the possibility of the divided self, one that is part oneself and part Other. With this notion associated with the reflected self in mind, Alastair Wright argues that in Gauguin's self-portraits, "The idea of dividedness, of a self not fully present to itself, resonates even more fully with [Gauguin's] own avowedly doubled nature- part European, part savage."[52] In *Self-Portrait with Idol* this idea is emphasized and given further expression in the portrayal of a self-divided between two opposing identities, the civilized self and the 'savage' Other.

Gauguin's self-portraits reflect a new type of inward directed art that had only been briefly experimented with in Romanticism.[53] Like Van Gogh, Gauguin wrote about his use of the color theories of the Neo-Impressionists.[54] In addition to color, Gauguin used strong, unblended lines to define his forms. Rejecting the Academic tradition of executing preparatory drawings before painting, claiming that this process was disruptive to harmony, Gaugin combined both color and line on his canvas.[55] On this topic in his notebook, Gauguin humorously wrote," 'Sir, you must draw properly before painting' – this said in a professorial manner; the greatest stupidities are always said that way."[56] The adoption of alter-egos in Gauguin's work has a double function in both constructing an identity as well as pointing to a true inward feeling or idea. The assumption of alter-egos and identities presented in Gauguin's paintings has both a

history in the genre of self-portraits and later becomes a tactic for artists in following generations. Although Gauguin's search for the primitive may seem to be an outright rejection of modernism, it can be understood as modern insofar as it is a reaction against the alienating conditions of modern society. Edvard Munch also responds to the feeling of alienation of the modern world in his self-portraits.

Born in 1863, the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch is known for psychologically charged paintings and prints depicting the emotional conditions of alienation in modern life. Over the course of his career he completed many self-portraits. As a young artist, Munch received formal training in Christiania and quickly became integrated into the city's avant-garde circles. Munch made two influential visits to Paris where he was exposed to the burgeoning Parisian avant-garde scene. During his visit in 1889 Munch became familiar with the work of Gauguin and the French Symbolists. The Symbolists view of art as timeless and personal contributed to shaping Munch's own perspective on the meaning of art.[57] Upon his return from Paris, Munch's style began to shift as he became increasingly skeptical of the role of naturalism in painting. Looking towards the German and Norwegian Romantics of the 19th century as well as modern literature, most notably the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, Munch's art took a new direction as a vehicle to search for a 'timeless, spaceless realm of universal symbols.'[58] Motifs and symbols such as the femme fatale, skeleton, and mask began to populate his works as he explored themes such as anxiety, death, and love. In a journal entry from 1889, Munch expressed his intention to imbue his art with subjectivity and feeling.[59] Munch's many self-portraits embody this mission of subjectivity and psychological experience.

Over the course of his long life, Munch made many self-portraits that incorporate his private experiences in the search for timeless truth.[60] In trying to identify a single common characteristic between his self-portraits, Arne Eggum writes, "In each picture the artist seems to pose the question: Who am I?"[61] In reflecting on the conditions of his own existence, Munch rejected naturalistic depictions of his physical self. He experimented with various treatments of color and line to portray emotion and create a psychological characterization of himself.[62] Announcing his aim to move away from naturalism in an entry into his Violet Diary from January of 1891, Munch wrote, "The painter gives what is most valuable to him- he gives the soul – his sorrow – his joy – he gives his own heart's blood."[63] Munch often portrayed himself as an allegorical figure, blurring the lines between his temporal self and eternal symbols.[64] In

these self-portraits, Munch extends the question of his own existence to examine more broadly the nature of mankind. The collection of Munch's self-portraits includes both paintings and prints, reflecting a changing attitude towards the division of high and low art. Munch used photography to stage himself and worked from photographs rather than a mirror-reflection.[65] All these characteristics present in the self-portraits of Munch reveal the artist as truly modern.

Munch's decision to move away from naturalism is visible when tracing the stylistic evolution of his self-portraits of the 1880s to the 1890s. *Self-Portrait* (1881/1882) (Fig. 17) was made while Munch was enrolled at the School of Drawing in Christiania.[66] The painting exemplifies Munch's early adherence to the naturalistic painting techniques taught in an academic setting. The palette for this painting is very subdued and the colors are rendered logically. Munch used light to create a sense of depth in the work and carefully depicted himself from the shoulders-up. In *Self-Portrait* (1886) (Fig. 18) Munch still adhered partially to naturalism, yet within the work there are divergences constituting a departure from what is observable in nature. The pose for the early two self-portraits appears the same, but in the 1886 version the paint has been applied roughly so that the surface takes on multiple textures. Munch selectively altered the clarity of certain physiological features as if manipulating the lens on a camera, blurring his ears while his eyes and mouth are in focus.[67] Munch's self-portrait from 1886 can be viewed an important stepping stone in his stylistic evolution from his early adherence to naturalism towards later highly subjective self-renderings.

By the 1890s, Munch's style had evolved to include a greater amount of subjectivity. In *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* (1895) (Fig. 19), Munch depicted himself from the waist-up holding a cigarette in his right hand. By diluting the paint, Munch created the effect of a smoke-filled room, blending his blue suit into the blue background. Swatches of color and lines differentiate Munch's body from the background but the relationship of his body and the space around him is mostly ambiguous. The counterpart to *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* is *Self-Portrait/Inferno* (1903) (Fig. 20), which pushes even further into the realm of the imagination. In response to the glow of the atmosphere, Munch's nude body is yellow and orange and outlined by a strong emerald contour. His body, cropped just below his torso, looks neither distinctly male nor female, appearing rather androgynous.[68] Munch's experimentation with color and line in these two self-portraits evoke strong emotions. Critics and the public often responded negatively to Munch's stylistic developments, considering it a product of what could only be a sick mind.[69] In 1895, the

psychiatrist Johan Scharffenberg even went as far as saying that Munch's self-depiction in *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* was the very confirmation that the artist suffered from insanity.[70] This stereotype of the mad genius has often been retrospectively applied to many of Munch's avant-garde contemporaries such as Gauguin and Van Gogh. The artist-genius was both a romantic and tragic notion and its peculiarities deserve a moment of reflection to consider to what extent this identity is prescribed or true.

Munch experimented with material throughout his career, creating many graphic works with methods such as lithography, etching, dry point, and woodcut.[71] One of Munch's most notable self-portraits on paper is *Self-Portrait with Skeleton Arm* (1895) (Fig. 21). Works on paper were widely regarded as secondary to painting and sculpture, yet Munch understood its communicative and reproductive advantages. Munch revealed that he worked in graphics so that his art could reach as many people as possible.[72] Affordable and created in a size fit for the small dwellings of modern cities, prints offered an alternate source for income when paintings were not selling or not fetching prices that could sustain a living. The symbolic significance of the skeleton used in *Self-Portrait with Skeleton Arm* serves as a memento mori.[73] This motif has been used widely throughout art history as a symbol of the eternal closeness and certainty of death. Munch incorporated symbols such as the skull in many of his works in an attempt to realize the eternal symbols of mankind.[74] The skull and its reference to death had a deeply personal significance for Munch. During his childhood, Munch's mother and sister died tragically, and he himself became critically ill several times.[75] In another self-portrait on paper titled *Flower of Pain* (1897) (Fig. 22) Munch moved even further into the realm of the symbolic, portraying himself as an allegorical figure. In synthesizing his personal experience with universal symbols, Munch created a new vocabulary of expression in his self-portraits.

In 1904 Munch's production of self-portraits increased, confirming the genre as one that would continue throughout his life. For self-portraits such as *Self-Portrait in Weimar* (1906) (Fig. 23) Munch made use of a camera to pose and created a painting with the photograph as if it were a preparatory drawing. This eliminated the need to constantly examine himself in a mirror as artists had to do in the past to create a self-portrait. It is significant that Munch worked from a photograph yet made a painting that was not an exact copy of the photograph. With the advent of this new technology, Munch integrated emotional and psychological elements that could not be captured by the camera. The conventionalized faces of the men in the background, the sweeping

lines made by the tables, and the contrasting colors express a sense of alienation and loneliness that would not have been communicated through in a photograph.[76] The theme of loneliness is present in many of Munch's later self-portraits such as *Self-Portrait between the Clock and the Bed* (1940/42) (Fig. 24). The latter shows Munch standing in between a clock and a bed, two symbols often connected with death.

The development of Munch's style visualizes a transformation in painting happening across Europe at the fin de siècle. Munch's paintings and prints are great contributions to the genre of self-portraiture. In his writings, Munch clearly indicated that a movement towards subjectivity is the future route for art.[77] Munch's use of symbols and allegory in his self-portraits connects him both to the history of the genre and with his contemporaries. In his extensive departure into expressionism, Munch inspired the German Expressionists who would come in the ensuing decades. Consciously departing from traditions of naturalism, Munch synthesized his subjective experience and universal symbols, and expanded the genre of self-portraits.

The presentation of stylized subjectivity in self-portraits by Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin and Edvard Munch reveal the growing tendency of modern painters to include their most individual point of view in a work of art. Although not working with the same vision in mind, these artists were aware of one another's pursuits. These three artists opened up the potential for subjectivity and abstraction in self-portraiture, paving the way for artists of future generations to create even more experimental works. With each self-portrait, a aspect of these artists' personalities arise, contributing to the complexity and mysteriousness of identity. Munch, Van Gogh, and Gauguin all made significant contributions to the genre of self-portraiture by including their subjectivity with formal experimentation and innovation.

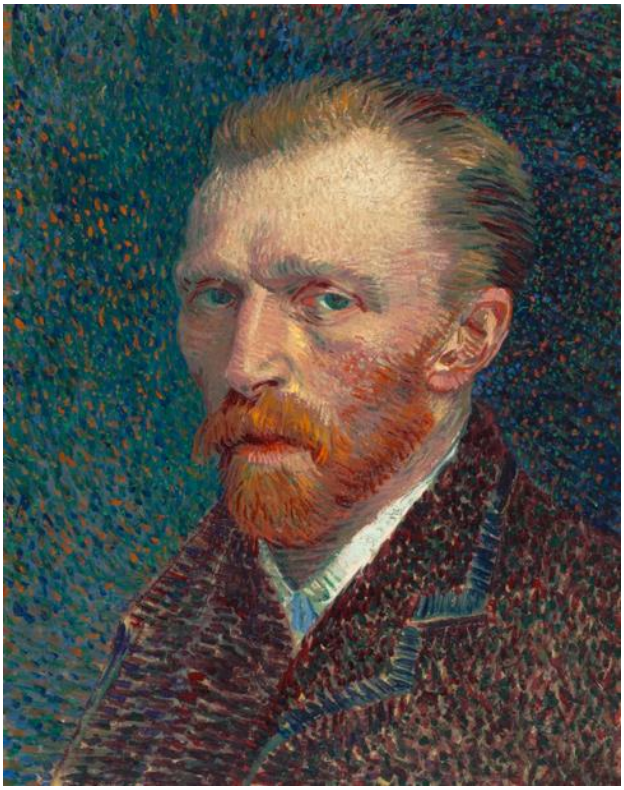

Fig. 1, Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait,* 1887. Oil on artist's board, mounted on cradled panel. The Art Institute of Chicago. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AWSS35953_35953_41726349.

Fig. 2, Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait at the Easel*, 1660. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre. *Images d'Art.* https://art.rmngp.fr/en/library/artworks/rembrandt_portrait-de-l-artiste-au-chevalet_huile-sur-toile?force-download=1111688.

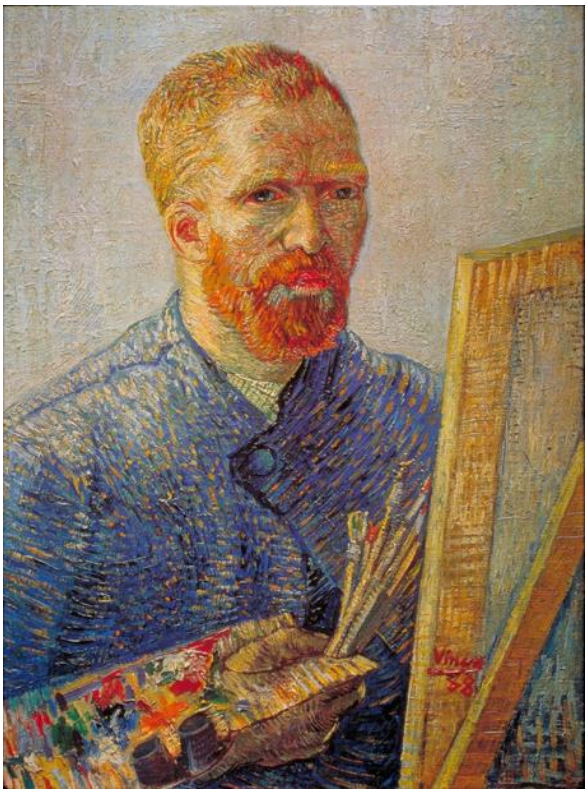

Fig. 3, Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait at the Easel,* 1888. Oil on canvas. Van Gogh Museum. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AIC_30028.

Fig. 4, Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Paul Gauguin*, 1888. Oil on canvas. Harvard Art Museums. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AWSS35953_35953_29354824.

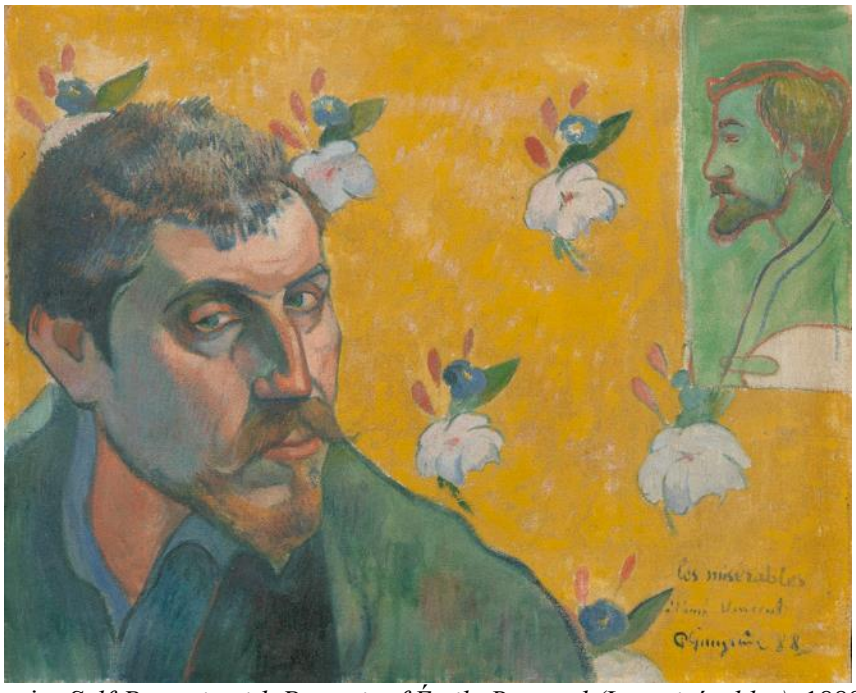

Fig. 5, Paul Gauguin, *Self-Portrait with Portrait of Émile Bernard (Les misérables)*, 1888. Oil on canvas. Van Gogh Museum. *Van Gogh Museum.* https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0224V1962.

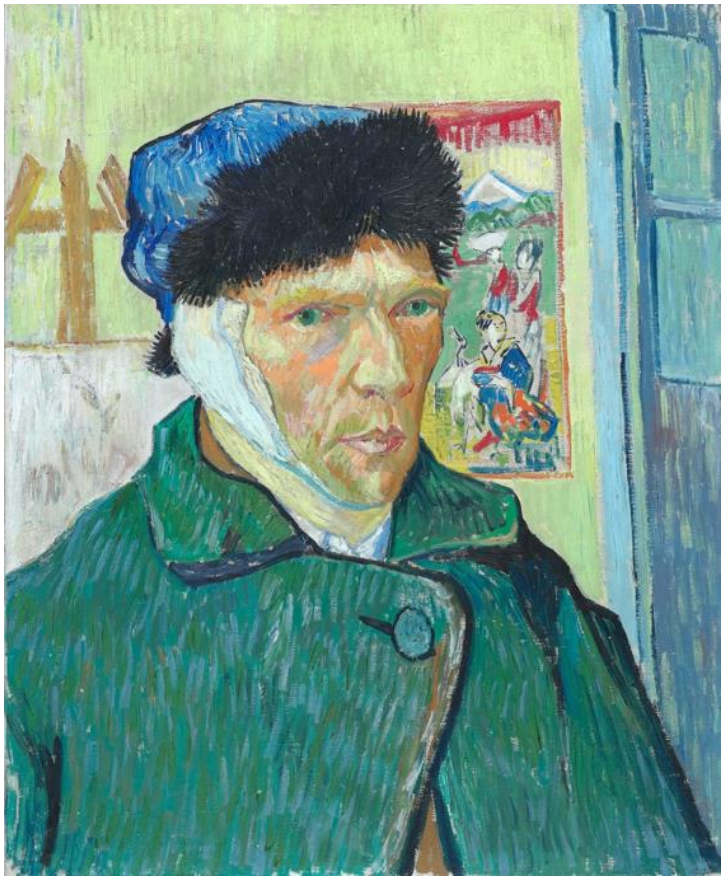

Fig. 6, Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear,* 1889. Oil on canvas. The Courtauld Gallery. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ACOURTAULDIG_10313599362.

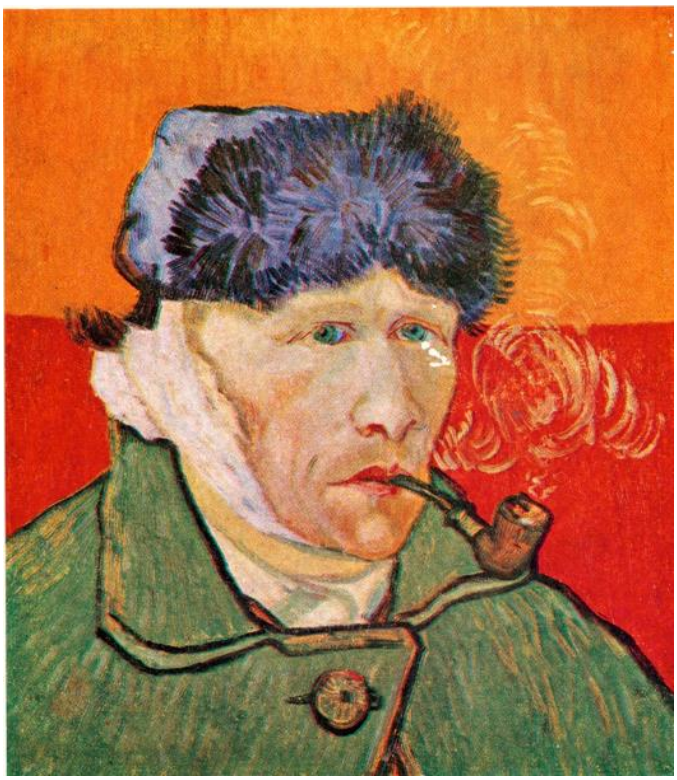

Fig. 7, Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear and Pipe,* 1889. Oil on canvas. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AWSS35953_35953_31705392.

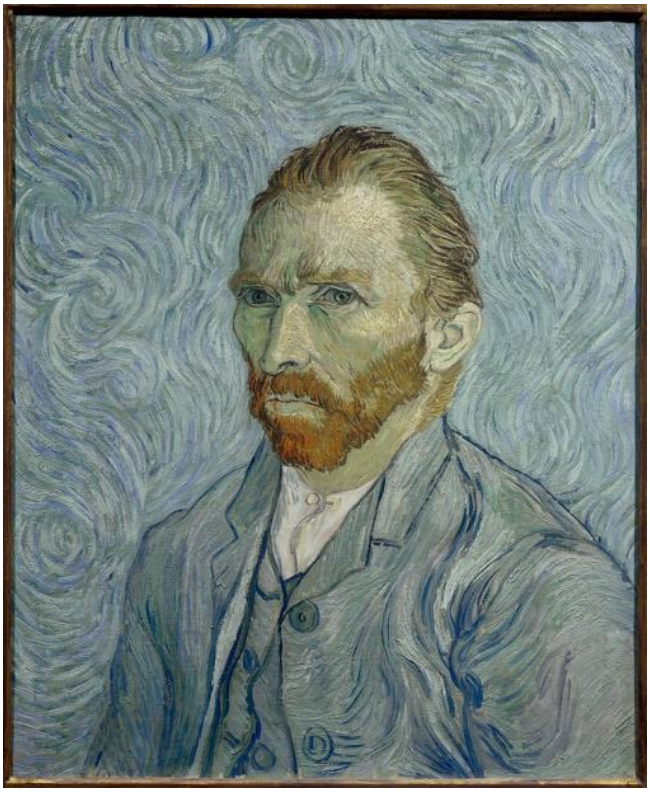

Fig. 8, Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait,* 1889. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/SCALA_ARCHIVES_1039930562.

Fig. 9, Paul Gauguin and Camille Pissarro, *Double Portrait of Paul Gauguin and Camille Pissarro,* c.1880. Charcoal and colored chalk on blue paper. Musée d'Orsay. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/LESSING_ART_10310119395.

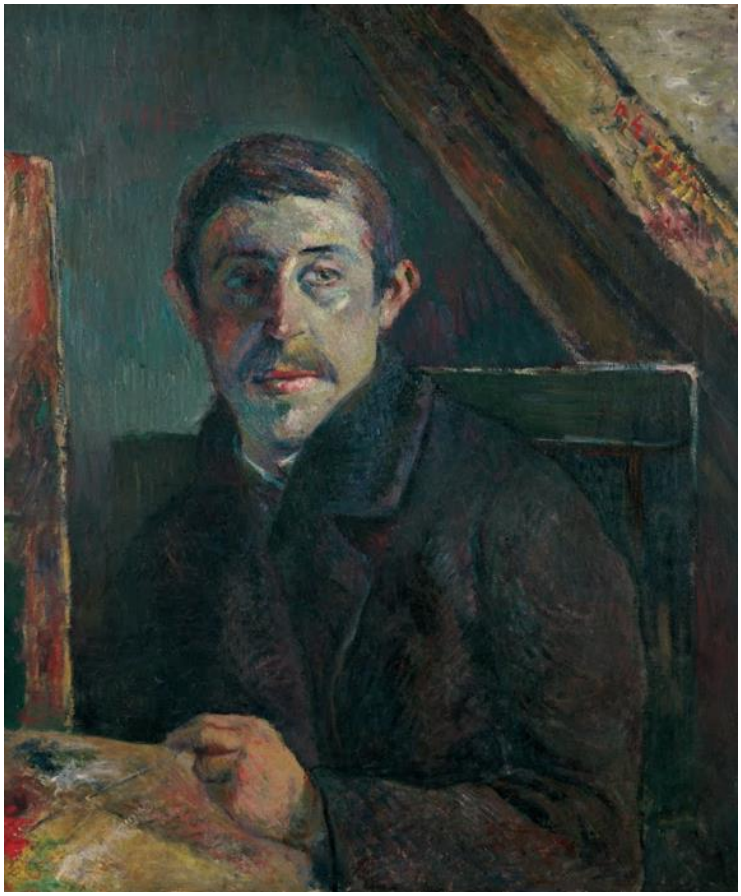

Fig. 10, Paul Gauguin, *Self-Portrait,* 1885. Oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum. *ArtStor* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000747665.

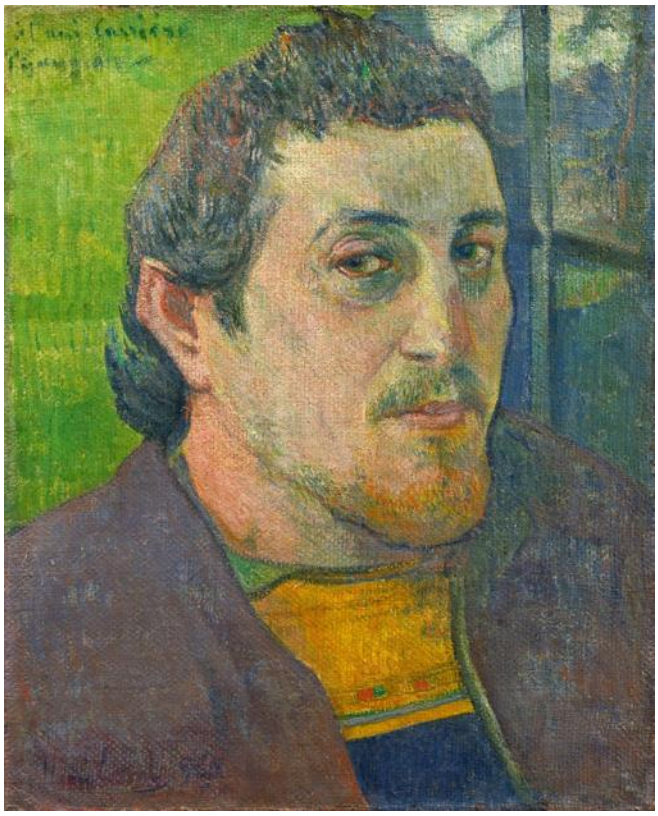

Fig. 11, Paul Gauguin, *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Carrière*, 1888. Oil on canvas. The National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.). *ArtStor*. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ANGAIG_10313974764.

Fig. 12, Paul Gauguin, *Christ in the Garden of Olives,* 1889. Oil on canvas. Norton Museum of Art. https://www.norton.org/collections/european

Fig. 13, Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait in a Fur Coat*, 1500. Oil on wood. Alte Pinakothek. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AIC_70026

Fig. 14, Paul Gauguin, *Self-Portrait Jar*, 1889. Enameled ceramic. Musée d'Orsay. *Images d'Art.* https://art.rmngp.fr/en/library/artworks/paul-gauguin_pot-anthropomorphe_sculpte_gres-ceramique_emaille?force-download=79635

Fig. 15, Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, 1770-1783. Lead. Musée du Louvre. *ArtStor. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARMNIG_10313469459*

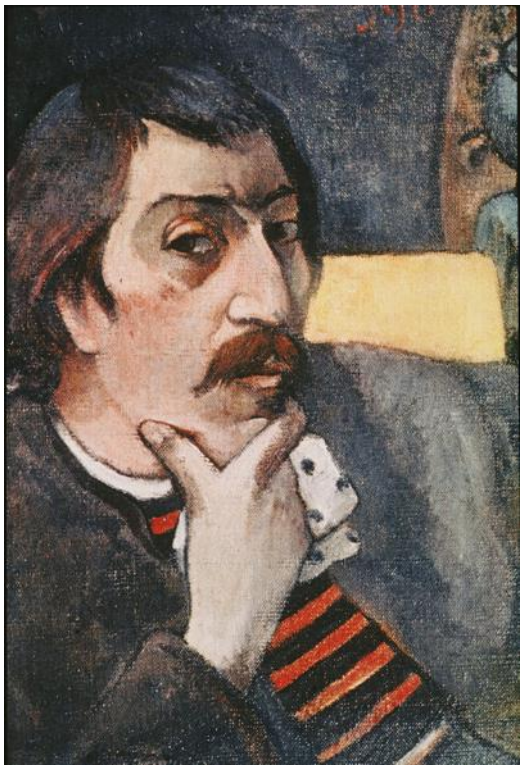

Fig. 16, Paul Gauguin, *Self-Portrait with Idol,* 1891. Oil on canvas. Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute. *ArtStor*. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000744472

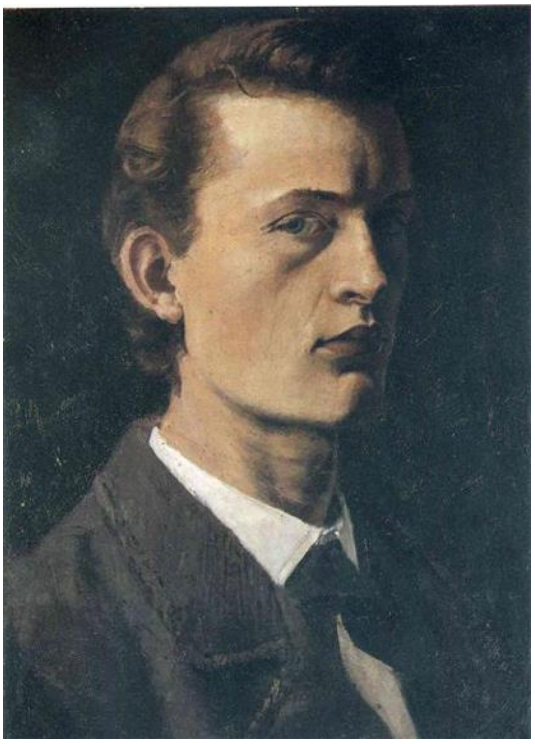

Fig. 17, Edvard Munch, *Self-Portrait,* 1881/1882. Oil on board. Munch Museum. *Edvard Munch: Symbols and Images.* Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1978. 22.

Fig. 18, Edvard Munch, *Self-Portrait,* 1886. Oil on canvas. Nasjonalgalleriet. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/HTRINITY_SASKIA_103910104705

Fig. 19, Edvard Munch, *Self-Portrait with Cigarette*, 1895. Oil on canvas. Nasjonalgalleriet. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000862514

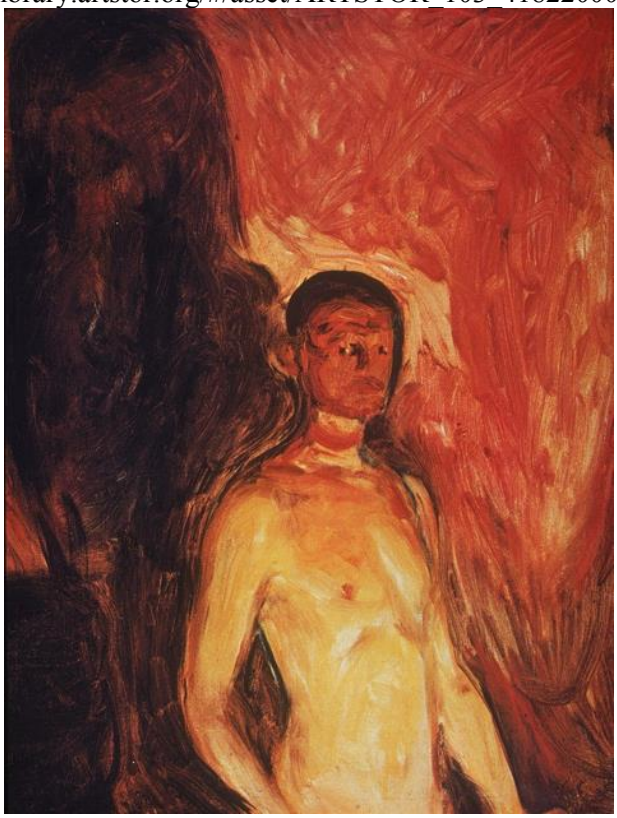

Fig. 20, Edvard Munch, *Self-Portrait/Inferno,* 1895. Oil on canvas. Oslo kommunes kunstsamlinger. *ArtStor. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000862530*

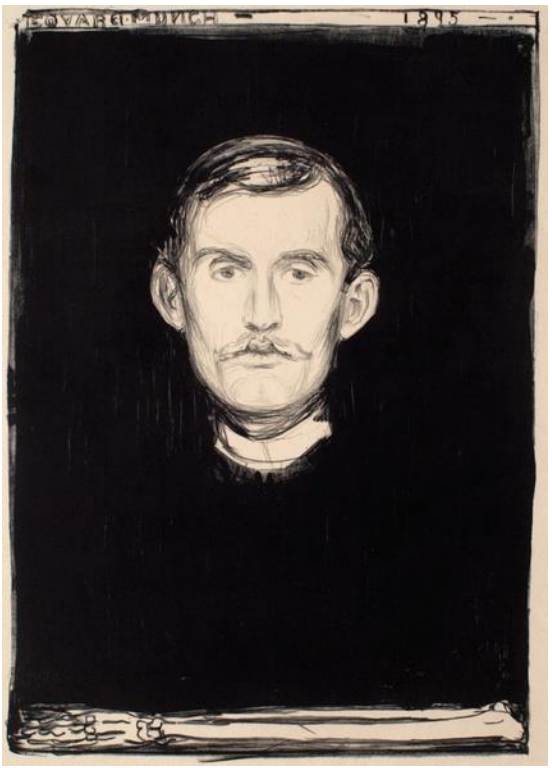

Fig. 21, Edvard Munch, *Self-Portrait with Skeleton Arm,* 1895. Lithograph printed in black on heavy white wove paper. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. *ArtStor. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AMICO_CLARK_103904425*

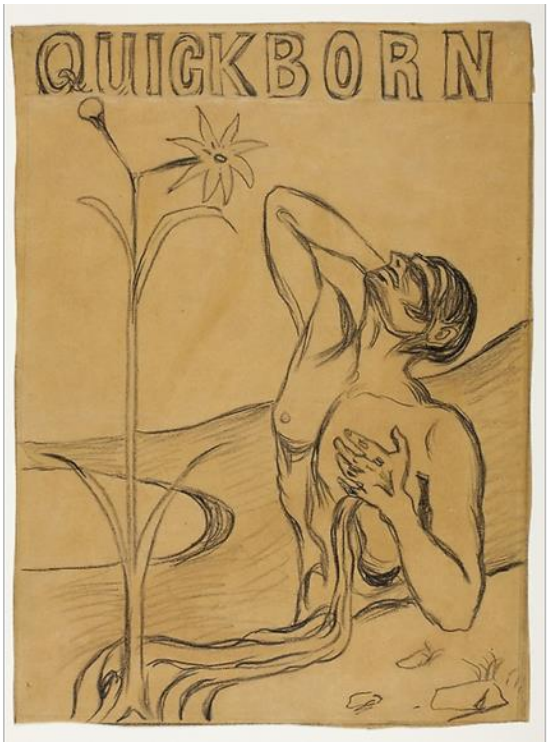

Fig. 22, Edvard Munch, *The Flower of Pain,* 1898. Black crayon, with graphite, on tan wove tracing paper. Art Institute of Chicago.

Fig. 23, Edvard Munch, *Self-Portrait in Weimar,* 1906. Oil on canvas. Nasjonalgalleriet. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000862811.

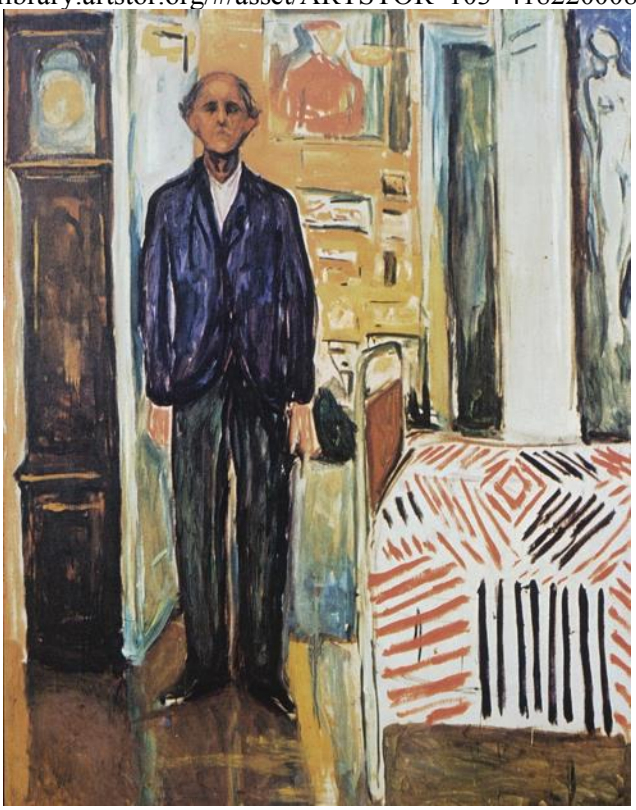

Fig. 24, Edvard Munch, *Self-Portrait Between the Clock and the Bed*, 1940-42. Oil on canvas. Munch-museet. *ArtStor. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000863066*

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[73] Eggum, “Munch’s Self-Portraits,” 20.
[74] Rosenblum, “Introduction,” 7.
[75] Torjusen, “The Mirror,” 190.
[76] Eggum, “Munch’s Self-Portraits,” 26.
[77] Munch, “Notebook and Diary Entries 1889-92,”1040.

Egon Schiele standing in front of his mirror, 1916. *ArtStor*. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000677276

Chapter Two

The nude has been a reoccurring subject in Western art for centuries. Despite its prominence in art history, the nude was practically unheard of in self-portraiture until the twentieth century. In the Western tradition, the few known nude self-portrait made before the twentieth century are two small ink drawings made by Dürer made in 1505 and 1518 (Fig. 1).[1] These small, private drawing were unique and served as the only known nude self-portraits for several centuries. Throughout the centuries, nakedness has had associations with shame and embarrassment, a view is deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition and appears in text as early as the first stories of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis.[2] In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the nude figure took on a new significance as part of rigorous academic training system at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.[3] Students who entered into the prestigious program learned to draw the nude by following a progression through different stages of observation. They began their studies by first creating sketches after drawings of the nude figure. Next, they moved onto sketching statues and finally after years of training they could sketch the nude figure from observing a live model. These sketches from live models, known as *académies*, primarily served as preparatory work for large scale history paintings that illustrate narratives from subjects from history, literature, religion, and mythology.[4] Despite strict censorship laws in France, the Academic nude was accepted due to its appeal to the concept of the 'ideal.'[5] The ideal nude was intended to sublimate eroticism through the appeal to a higher, Aesthetic sensibility.[6] The artist often rendered these figures with qualities such as ideal proportions, desirable anatomy, and smooth flesh. In many ways, the ideal nude reached its highpoint in the French Academic system. However, this was not the way Modernists intended to treat their body in self-portraiture.

Changing attitudes at the fin de siècle towards the body, sexuality, and the purpose of art prompted artists to experiment with the nude. Artists left behind the form of the ideal nude and looked at their bodies with a new attitude. Over time, the nude self-portrait has become a considerable subgenre in self-portraiture. Important changes in cultural attitude regarding the body occurred during the early-twentieth century. Established religion, whose moral stance on the body and sexuality was strict, increasingly lost its grip and influence. In his texts in the late-

nineteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche referred to the self as the body rather than as a soul or spirit, positing it importantly as the basis of the will and the psychological self.[7] The psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud presented the libido, or desire, as the driving force of all human action. Additionally, Freud modernized theories of sexuality which included a new attitude towards homosexuality, denouncing its status as a perversion.[8] Both Freud and Nietzsche associated sexuality with the act of art making, considering it to come about through a sublimation of desire aimed towards a higher intellectual purpose.[9] A practical shift that allowed for the nude self-portrait to emerge was a relaxing of laws concerning censorship and freedom of expression. Within the context of this shifting cultural climate, artists created revolutionary works, successfully introducing the nude self-portrait as a type within self-portraiture. Artists such as Egon Schiele, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Frida Kahlo, and Maria Lassnig, Alice Neel, and Lucian Freud chose to work with nude self-portraits, exploring new ways of understanding themselves with a central focus on their body.

Egon Schiele (1890-1918) rose to prominence in Viennese art circles in the early twentieth century. During his childhood, Schiele's family life was tormented by his father who became increasingly insane after contracting syphilis.[10] Schiele grew up on the outskirts of Vienna, a city undergoing rapid expansion and industrialization at the turn of the century. Schiele came to age on the close of the Viennese Secession movement and prominent Secessionist artist Gustav Klimt served as his mentor before Schiele came into his own style.[11] By the time he took on Schiele, Klimt was a highly recognized figure of the European Avant-Garde, especially known for his masterful rendering of the female nude.[12] Despite achieving fame for his treatment of the female nude, Klimt resisted shifting the focus towards himself and never made a nude self-portrait.[13] The decorative quality of Schiele's early works has a tangible stylistic affinity to the work of Klimt. Tobias G. Natter suggests that Schiele's decision to turn towards himself as the subject of his art was partially taken in an effort to distance himself from the influence of Klimt in a search for artistic autonomy.[14] Schiele also differentiated himself from his mentor by eventually rejecting the rich ornamentation and decoration so characteristic of Klimt's works.[15] In most of his self-portraits, Schiele isolated his figure, minimizing any distracting features to highlight the drama expressed by bodily form. To create his self-portraits, Schiele enacted a system of posing, observing his mirror-image, drawing, and repeating that same process until he completed the work.[16] There was a performative character to his process of staging his body and

experimenting with gesture.[17] Important to the history of the nude self-portrait, Schiele rejected traditional male body types that appealed to the aesthetics of beauty and the ideal in favor of a body image which provokes feelings of disgust and repulsion.[18]

In using himself as his own model, Schiele was able to create dramatic, contorted poses and manipulate every possible bodily expression through movement and gesture.[19] In *Self-Portrait* (1910) (Fig. 2), Schiele contorted his body into an uncomfortable twisted pose paired with a snarling face. Schiele added a thick white line to differentiate his figure from the dull background, a technique he would use for many of his self-portraits thereafter. Although his pose is aggressive, Schiele's contemporaries described him generally as 'relaxed and agreeable.'[20] These comments reinforce that his process of experiential self-reflection had a performative quality. Schiele's gaze confronts the viewer and records the moment of his own self-confrontation in his mirror. Schiele's scrutinization of his body was simultaneously a psychological examination, and he conveyed his inner psyche by means of his bodily pose and expressive color.[21] Describing the challenge of this dual confrontation, Schiele wrote, "If I am to see myself in my entirety, I shall have to both view myself and to know myself, which I do indeed wish to do: [to grasp] what is taking place within me, but also how far I am able to go in observing that."[22] In a 1912 text designed to guide the psychoanalytic practice, Sigmund Freud wrote, "The doctor should be opaque to his patients, and, like a mirror, should show them nothing but what is shown to him."[23] In Schiele's intense use of the mirror to scrutinize himself, psychologist Danielle Knafo suggests that the mirror in this case replaces the role of the psychoanalyst in the creation of Schiele's self-portraits, ultimately leading to a similar confrontation of the self that results from a psychoanalytic session.[24] The direct confrontation of the body and psyche in an effort to know himself continued to unfold and play a central role in Schiele's self-portraits.

In a self-portrait from 1910 titled *The Yellow Nude* (Fig. 3), Schiele depicted his body with yellow flesh against a stark white background. His body is decontextualized, further emphasizing Schiele's contorted figure to be the central focus. With closed eyes, Schiele positioned himself in a seated pose with his arms shielding his face. Knowing that Schiele chose to render his self-portraits by looking at himself in a mirror, the choice to close his eyes could not possibly record his physical observation. Schiele's self-portraits were as much a physical exploration as a psychological one, and perhaps this gesture represents a confrontation of the

psyche through close examination.[25] Like Munch, the Norwegian artist discussed in Chapter One, Schiele's self-portraits surpass that which is physically observable and include elements of his psychological self. In his choice to amputate his feet from the image, Schiele's treatment of the human body appears violent.[26] In this act against himself, Schiele is both the victim and the perpetrator.[27] This fragmentation of the body has been interpreted as evocative of the Nietzschean concept of the vivisector, with Schiele experimenting on himself by slicing open his body and soul.[28] In the *Yellow Nude* Schiele rendered himself with hair all over his body, a choice that went against old conventions of representing the nude. In the French Academic system, pubic hair had frank erotic associations and was thereby rendered minimally or not at all.[29] Schiele presented himself as androgynous, rendering his genitals and nipples ambiguously so that they could be male or female, thereby blurring the nominal boundary between the sexes.[30] Rather than presenting a beautiful and well-proportioned nude, Schiele presented an ambiguous, gruesome, and unidealized version of the human body.[31]

In his *Self-Portrait Masturbating* (1911) (Fig. 4), Schiele depicted himself semi-nude, fondling his genitals with both hands in the act of masturbation.[32] The dark coat which contrasts his fair skin covers much of Schiele's body yet leaves his genitalia exposed. In displaying himself masturbating, Schiele pointed to sexuality as a principle characteristic of embodied identity.[33] While performing this erotic act, Schiele appealed to aesthetic principles of disgust and repulsion rather than conventional measures of beauty. This pose and the treatment of the human figure powerfully subverts the traditional conception of the ideal nude. Schiele's presentation of himself certainly did not obey historical models for the nude nor follow social conventions and taboos.[34] Despite the development of new theories regarding human sexuality, the general attitude of the public on the topic had not yet evolved. In Vienna during the early twentieth century, Schiele received criticism for his work which was viewed by many as obscene and pornographic. In 1912, Schiele was tried for abduction and rape of a minor and imprisoned for 24 days having several of his works confiscated and destroyed.[35] This incident, described as "offenses against public morality," reinforced Schiele's perception of himself as an outsider from Viennese society.[36] Even today, the general attitude towards topics of human sexuality may cause one to wince when viewing Schiele's sexually explicit work.

In 1918, Schiele died an untimely death from the Influenza Pandemic that swept across Europe in the wake of the First World War killing millions of people. Despite his early death, the

works that Schiele completed in his lifetime have proven incredibly influential to the history of art and genre of self-portraiture. Schiele's nude self-portraits are modern to the extent that they reject past conventions of the ideal male nude in favor of a new vocabulary for rendering the human figure. By using his exposed body for self-portraiture, Schiele temporally situates the figure within the present, rejecting the temporal distancing through myth and narrative associated with the ideal nude. Discarding the poised elegance and balanced poses of the ideal nude, Schiele rendered himself twisted and contorted. As opposed to solid and muscular, Schiele's figure is thin and often rendered with a loose brush stroke using the liquid quality of his paint to threaten the idea of his body as a solid mass. Perhaps most importantly, Schiele's self-portraits reflect a direct confrontation and exploration of his body and psyche, revolutionizing both the physical and psychological treatment of the self in the genre of self-portraiture.

Before Schiele radically transformed the male nude in his psychologically charged self-portraits, German artist Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876-1907) revolutionized the treatment of the female body her self-portraits. Like Munch, childhood trauma was influential in her artmaking. On a childhood visit with her cousins Maidli and Cora, the three girls were playing in a sandpit when Cora was tragically buried alive as the other two girls attempted to shield their eyes from the horrifying event. She described the experience of watching her cousin's dreadful death as the moment when the 'first glimmer of self-awareness' was introduced in her life.[37] Modersohn-Becker received formal academic training in London in 1892 and in Berlin from 1896-1898, during which time she expressed a desire to paint the nude figure.[38] Despite receiving formal academic training, Modersohn-Becker actively voiced a commitment to modern art in her letters and journals. She pursued painting in the artists' colony of Worspwede and in Paris. Of Modersohn-Becker's nearly twenty self-portraits, seven are either partial or full-length nudes.[39] While the female self-portrait has a precedent in the Western tradition with works by artists such as Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun (Fig. 5) and Artemisia Gentileschi, most of these self-portraits served the function of expressing their virtue as a painter by masterfully rendering their mirror-image. Contributing to other areas of modern art besides the nude self-portrait, Modersohn-Becker also created many nude portraits of mothers and children, elderly women, and young girls from a modern perspective. However, most importantly for this study centered the body in self-portraiture, Modersohn-Becker was the first female artist to turn the mirror on herself and portray the female from the first-person perspective. Although the images are

subversive to depictions of the female nudes by her male contemporaries, this was not Modersohn-Becker's aim. Rather, she was motivated to create nude self-portraits by a lifelong desire to paint the revered art historical subject, turning to self-portraits to develop her skills according to her own vision

After finishing art school in Berlin, Modersohn-Becker moved to the year-round artists' colony of Worpswede situated near her hometown of Bremen.[40] In Worpswede, Modersohn-Becker studied with a prominent artist in the colony, Fritz Mackensen, whose work was primarily concerned with the human figure.[41] While studying under Mackensen, the two disagreed on how to render the nude. Mackensen criticized Modersohn-Becker for a lack of concern for studying nature, but she had a different vision in mind for her nude figures. In her journal, Modersohn-Becker wrote, "What I feel inside myself is like a fine web, a vibrating, a beating wing, a trembling repose, a holding of my breath. Once I can paint this, I will paint this."[42] Modersohn-Becker continued to experiment with the nude figure during extended visits to Paris and at home in Worpswede. During one return to Worswede from Paris, Modersohn-Becker married Otto Modersohn. During her visits to Paris, Modersohn-Becker was introduced to the works of modernist painters. Her interest in the art of the past was stimulated during visits to the Louvre, where she became intrigued with ancient sculpture, Old Master paintings, and nineteenth-century works.[43] Her experimentation with self-portraiture began after fleeing her marriage for Paris in 1906.

Just before her departure to Paris in 1906, Modersohn-Becker's good friend, poet Rainer Maria Rilke, sent a letter to Karl von der Heydt stating, "Modersohn's wife [is] at a wholly original state in her painting, painting ruthlessly and bluntly things that are very Worpswede-like, and yet have never been seen or painted by anyone. And in this totally original manner, strangely close to Van Gogh and his style."[44] In her Paris studio, Modersohn-Becker, created *Self-Portrait, Age 30, 6th Wedding Day* (1906) (Fig. 6). Against an imaginary backdrop, Modersohn-Becker rendered her body partially nude, revealing her bare breasts and torso. Wearing a string of amber beads and a white cloth that rests just below her bulging stomach, Modersohn-Becker appears to be pregnant despite not being pregnant at all. Diane Radycki proposes that Modersohn-Becker's choice to render herself pregnant communicates her desire take on the roles of artist and mother.[45] Artists and mothers are both defined by their ability to create. Portrayed as both mother and artist, Modersohn-Becker referred to her special feminine

right to artistic creation and biological procreation.[46] Rather than recording biographic details, Modersohn-Becker was exploring her wants and wishes. In discussing Modersohn-Becker, Rilke's wife wrote to him saying, "A child—she believes—is necessary for a woman to be a real woman."[47] In choosing to render herself pregnant, Modersohn-Becker visualizes her conception of feminine identity as described in Rilke-Weshoff's letter. In the lower corner, Modersohn-Becker inscribed the phrase, "I painted this at age 30/ on my 6th wedding day. /PB."[48] Through this inscription, Modersohn Becker pointed to her role as both the painter and the nude model being depicted in the image. This self-portrayal of the nude female body illustrating her conception of feminine identity through pregnancy was unprecedented in the history of art.

Although the depiction of the pregnant nude was unprecedented in the genre of self-portraiture, it had made waves in portraiture in 1903 with Gustave Klimt's painting *Hope I* (Fig. 7). Klimt's painting depicted a nude woman in profile to accentuate her pregnant state. This pose also just barely reveals her breasts and pubic hair. Surrounded by skeletons and other figures with gruesome grimaces, the woman looks out at the viewer holding the promise of new life within a world of death. When the image was first exhibited, it became the cause of scandal.[49] Intune with the European Avant-Garde, it is quite possible that this painting which warranted such a scandal was known Modersohn-Becker. There are essential differences between Modersohn-Becker and Klimt's works, the most important being the treatment of the female body and the point of view of the artist. Klimt's figure is tall and slender and her stomach is accentuated beyond what occurs naturally. The focus is not the pregnant woman, but the deeply symbolic associations with pregnancy as the hope of new life. Modersohn-Becker's self-portrait is about her desires, her body, and her feminine identity. Although the work was not intended to be subversive to Klimt's, the differences in treatment have quite different effects. Another distinction between these works were their viewing conditions. While Klimt's work was displayed publicly giving rise to scandal, Modersohn-Becker's *Self-Portrait, Age 30, 6th Wedding Day* stayed in her studio as a private painting and was seen only by select visitors.[50] This was the case for all Modersohn-Becker's nude self-portraits, as they were not displayed to a public audience until well after her early death. Did Modersohn-Becker have a future audience in mind? Although she had not exhibited many of her paintings during her lifetime, Modersohn-Becker's untimely death occurred just as she put all her inhibitions aside and decided to seriously

pursue painting in Paris. With this in mind, it is quite possible that Modersohn-Becker intended to show these works and take her place among the ranks of the avant-garde.

Modersohn-Becker continued to pursue the nude self-portrait from her Paris apartment in 1906. In *Self-Portrait with Amber Necklace, Half length, II* (1906) (Fig. 8), Modersohn-Becker displayed her nude torso against an imaginary outdoor backdrop that was perhaps inspired by studio visits to Le Douanier Henri Rousseau.[51] The amber beads around her neck, which were seen before in *Self-Portrait, Age 30, 6th Wedding Day,* were worn exclusively in Modersohn-Becker's nude self-portraits. One can speculate about the significance of these beads. Perhaps, they were a gift from Rilke who describes them in a poem which served as a tribute to Modersohn-Becker after her death titled "Requiem for a Friend". In this poem Rilke tenderly described how he wished to see Modersohn-Becker once again undressed before a mirror examining herself, suggesting that he may have been present in her studio as she was preparing her self-portraits.[52] Modersohn-Becker worked from posed nude photographs when creating her painted self-portraits. Diane Radycki goes as far as to suggest that it may have been Rilke behind the camera taking nude photographs of Modersohn-Becker that she would use to create her self-portraits.[53] One photograph taken in her Paris studio was used to create *Self-Portrait with Amber Necklace, Half length, II* (Fig. 9.[54] Modersohn-Becker used these photographs to plan her self-portraits in lieu of the traditional system of creating multiple drafts of meticulous preparatory sketches.[55] This technique to create images was seen in Chapter One with Edvard Munch and continues to be a method used by artists today.

In *Large Standing Self-Portrait Nude* (1906) (Fig. 11) Modersohn-Becker introduced for the first time in the history of art a life-size nude self-portrait. Although her face is not rendered clearly, the figure can be identified as Modersohn-Becker from her string of amber beads and the shape of her body. As Schiele would do several years later in his own self-portraits, Modersohn-Becker portrayed herself with pubic hair, a feature that had explicit erotic associations.[56] This display, however, was not intended to be erotic but rather to capture the reality of the female body. Likely influenced by the artists of the Parisian Avant-Garde, Modersohn-Becker played with the contrast of complementary colors. The blue background recedes in space while the warm orange accents visible in the fruit, beads, and highlights across the figure come forward to the front of the plane. In this self-portrait, Modersohn-Becker's longtime goal of portraying the

nude resulted in an image that has come to be known in the Western tradition as the first life-size full-length nude self-portrait.

Painted almost exclusively by the male artist, the female nude in history had been idealized or, in more recent history, eroticized such as in Manet's *Olympia* (1863-1865) (Fig. 11). Neither idealized nor erotic, in *Large Standing Self-Portrait Nude* Modersohn-Becker's treatment of the nude is something entirely different than traditional depictions of the female body by male artists.[57] From her training as an artist and her many visits to the Louvre to copy and study works of art, Modersohn-Becker was well aware of the significance of the nude in the history of art. In 1903, Modersohn-Becker took a five-week trip to Paris visiting the Louvre daily where she took special interest in Old Master paintings, ancient sculpture, and more recent nineteenth century works.[58] In 1905 Modersohn-Becker returned again to Paris. "Strange, this time the old masters do not have so strong an effect on me," Modersohn-Becker reported back to Otto in a letter, "Instead, it's mainly the very, very modern artists."[59] In Paris, Picasso, Matisse, and others were working in their own veins of modernism yet common to all was a break with the old-tradition of the female nude in favor of a new type of representation.[60] Historian of Cubism Natasha Staller observed, "The contest for the supremacy of the avant-garde was being fought in the arena of the female nude, painted in large scale, painted aggressively, painting in a resolutely androgynous or anti-feminine manner." Her desire to paint the female nude shows that Modersohn-Becker was well aware of the trends of modernism. Modersohn-Becker shared with these male artists an aim to break with century-old traditions of the female nude, yet her approach to create a modern female nude was wholly unique in its honest treatment of the female body. Her aim was not to subvert female nudes made by male artists, but rather to take on this monumental subject in her own way.

Despite many differences, modernists all shared an interest in favoring fresh, new modes of expression over those that were widely accepted and practiced.[61] The precedent that had been set for the female nude was one that was created as an object of male desire for a male audience.[62] In breaking with the conventional and centuries-old tradition of the male depiction of female nudes, Modersohn-Becker's nude self-portraits entered into uncharted territory and set a new model for artists to come, both male and female. Her intentions to explore her own identity by means of depicting her body are wrapped up in a letter to Otto from 1903, in which she describes her own association with the sight of her nude body with her 'soul laid bare.'[63]

Modersohn-Becker died in 1907 from complications associated with the birth of her only daughter. Although both Modersohn-Becker and Schiele's careers were cut short from untimely deaths, the impact they made in their lifetimes on the genre of self-portraiture was monumental.

After Modersohn-Becker and Schiele first portrayed themselves nude, the nude self-portrait was explored by other artists, eventually becoming a distinct type within the genre. One of the most celebrated artists of the twentieth century and well-known self-portraitist, Mexican painter Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), contributed to the development of the nude self-portrait. In many of her self-portraits, Kahlo brilliantly illustrated her life including biographical details and emotional responses to the events she faced. On her self-portraits, Kahlo wrote, "I paint self-portraits because I am so often alone, because I am the person I know best."[64] Often times, Kahlo addressed topics that extended beyond herself, such as loss, pain, and suffering, by reflecting on her own experience to convey these human experiences. Central to unpacking Kahlo's self-portraits is an understanding of the emotional and physical pain that Kahlo endured throughout her life caused by a series of illnesses and accidents. As a child, Kahlo suffered from polio and the effects of the illness were present throughout her life. In 1925 at the age of 18, Kahlo was involved in an auto-accident while riding a bus that left her in critical condition and hospitalized for several months.[65] In her self-portraits, Kahlo depicted her nude body to express both the physical and emotional pain that was manifest throughout her life.

In 1932, Kahlo decided to begin a project for which she would create a painting for every year of her life. This series started in 1932 with the painting *My Birth* (Fig. 12). This image, which Kahlo described as, "How I imagined I was born," depicts the artist in the midst of giving birth to herself.[66] The point of view places the spectator in the position where a nurse assisting in delivery would have stood, thus seeing every detail of the birth in process. In the center of the image, Kahlo lined up her head emerging in birth, her covered head, and the iconic image of the Virgin of Sorrows. The portrayal of the Virgin of Sorrows did not have a religious significance but rather served to represents the memory of her recently passed, devoutly Catholic mother.[67] In this image, birth is depicted as a traumatic event. The hemorrhaging blood on the bed marks from the very the beginning of life the inescapable association with death.[68] Depicting feminine subjects that were considered taboo, the confrontational point of view in *My Birth* exposes the female genitalia and pubic hair from which Kahlo's head emerges. While Kahlo's image depicts a rather graphic scene, she was able to distance the viewer from the intensity of the event through

slight abstraction and a deliberate naivety.[69] In the Western tradition, the phenomenon of childbirth was addressed in art by the depiction of the Christian Nativity scene. The moment in the narrative that is usually depicted is well after the delivery while the Christ child is peacefully resting. Kahlo's birth scene is anything but peaceful. Deliberately subverting the traditional iconography of birth in Western art, Kahlo invented a new vocabulary for addressing the complexities of the relationship between womanhood and motherhood.

In the 1932 self-portrait titled *Henry Ford Hospital* (Fig. 13), Kahlo depicted her naked body on a hospital bed. Crying, hemorrhaging, and grasping at her bulging stomach, Kahlo represented herself in a moment of intense emotional and physical pain. The bed that she lays in appears to be dropped in an empty expanse with only an industrial park visible in the background. From Kahlo's hand appear six red lines reminiscent of umbilical cords. These cords lead to symbolic objects surrounding her naked body.[70] The hemorrhaged blood on the bed is representative of one of the multiple miscarriages suffered by Kahlo.[71] Kahlo rendered her miscarriage as intensely emotional and physically traumatic. The topic of miscarriage was atypical in the art historical canon, and Kahlo approached it with an unabashed directness. The symbols that surround Kahlo refer to her miscarriage directly or speak more broadly to pain and suffering.[72] The meaning of this painting is multilayered. Kahlo's deliberately depicted herself as the weeping woman, or La Llorana. An archetypical evil woman in Mexican folklore, La Llorana is abandoned by her lover and in a frenzy of madness she consumes her own children.[73] La Llorana is the antithesis of the normative mother as designated by gender roles in Mexican society.[74] In her association with this figure, Kahlo proclaimed herself to be outside these normative gender roles and speaks to the oppressive nature they have in Mexican society. Kahlo used her nude body and a deeply personal narrative to confront issues of femininity more broadly in society.

In the mid 1940's, Kahlo's health began to deteriorate from new ailments and complications caused by her past afflictions. One such complication from her bus accident and the long-term effects of polio put stress on her back. Consequently, Kahlo had to wear a metal orthopedic corset which helped to mitigate the issue but caused tremendous pain.[75] In *The Broken Column* (1944) (Fig. 14) Kahlo illustrated the physical agony that she was experiencing while simultaneously expressing her fortitude to bear the pain. Kahlo's partially nude figure confronts the viewer straight-on.[76] Physical and emotional torment is communicated by the nails

stuck into her skin, the fissure ripping through the center of her body exposing a crumbling ionic capital, and the tears falling down her face. Kahlo rendered her arms stiff against her body, appearing immobile or fixed to the ground like a column. Hayden Herrera compares this image to iconic paintings of the Christian martyr St. Sebastian whose body is often rendered full of the arrows that killed him.[77] In using an iconic presentation, Kahlo equated her pain and suffering with that of martyrs who were tormented and tortured before their death. These figures were often rendered nude or semi-clothed representing their humiliation as part of their suffering. By reinterpreting this image with her naked body, Kahlo does not appear humiliated, but rather steady as she faced the burden of her pain.

In her self-portraits, Kahlo depicted herself nude to explore death, pain, suffering, and the realities of the feminine experience. Her work has been associated with Surrealism, Magical Realism, and Symbolism, but Kahlo's unique style developed as distinctly her own. Underlying *My Birth, Henry Ford Hospital,* and *The Broken Column* is a deeply rooted sense of pain and suffering which Kahlo experienced constantly throughout her life. As seen in Chapter One, Edvard Munch also addressed the themes of death and psychological torment in his art. By depicting herself nude, Kahlo was able to heighten the intensity of her physical and emotional agony. Suffering, both physically and emotionally, is an integral part of being human. To depict this aspect of human existence, Kahlo turned towards her own body to expose her own vulnerability. Although the causes of her suffering were unique to her life story, Kahlo used the nude in her self-portraits in a way that communicates the phenomena of pain and suffering that can be read universally. Kahlo's self-portraits will be further discussed in Chapter Three for her unique approach to identity.

While Kahlo used to her body to convey feelings of physical pain, Austrian artist Maria Lassnig (1919-2014) took all types of perception and sensation as the point of departure for the treatment of her body in her 'body-awareness' paintings. Lassnig began experimenting with her body-awareness paintings as early as the 1940s and continued to pursue this theme until her death in 2014.[78] In a note on body-awareness painting from 1970, Lassnig wrote, "When, in my painting, I become tired of analytically depicting nature, I searched for a reality that was more fully in my possession than the exterior world, and I found it waiting for me in the body which houses me, the realest and closest reality."[79] In this quote, Lassnig identifies a disconnect between her inner self and the exterior world. Her body, which Lassnig writes "houses me",

seems to be at once a mediator and a barrier to the exterior world. Jennifer Higgie observed, "The struggle here is between two worlds; the surface (of the skin, of the painting, of paint) and the inner world (of the painter, of the person looking at the painting). The artist is at once herself, the body she inhabits, and the subject of her own creativity."[80] Lassnig must become aware of these sensations in order to articulate them on canvas. Once aware of her body sensations, Lassnig used line and color to depict the way her body feels rather than how it realistically appears. As her 'closest reality,' Lassnig's sensations were the truest things she knows, and therefore when painting she aimed to approach the canvas with no other intentions.[81] Her process includes meditation and introspection, sometime even painting with her eyes closed to connect with her imagination.[82] Her process was physically intensive, laying down with her paintings, feeling her way around the canvas.

Lassnig created her body-awareness paintings on both paper and canvas. Drawings and watercolors, however, did not serve as preparatory sketches for subsequent paintings. Unlike artists such as Modersohn-Becker and Munch, Lassnig refused to work from photographs.[83] Lassnig believed that her works on paper, in their fluidity and instantaneity, were the closest thing to a physical manifestation of an idea that she could create.[84] In one of her early works on paper, *Self-Portrait in the Garden* (Fig. 15) from 1961, Lassnig experimented with theories of line and color that would become central to her more developed practice of body-awareness paintings. In a journal describing her different approaches taken in painting than in drawing or watercolor, Lassnig wrote, "Even more difficult than the graphic representation of body awareness, which turns out to be much more abstract in line contours than in painting, is explaining the colors of body awareness, so here only a description: the forehead gets a thinking color, the nose an olfactory color, the back, arms, and legs flesh-covering color; there are pain colors and torture colors, nerve colors, discomfort and fullness colors, stretching and pressing colors, hollow and swelling colors, crushing and burning colors, death and decomposition colors, fear of cancer colors—these are colors of reality."[85] In *Lady with Brain* (1990-1999) (fig. 17) Lassnig exhibits each of these 'colors of reality' which turn out to be very unnatural. Working with a palette of florescent greens, purples, and yellows, neon pink, and electric blue Lassnig visualized the invisible phenomena of sensation with free license to assign any color as the reality of that feeling. Objectifying the subjective, Lassnig presented a new theory of relationship between sensation and color.

In the painting *Three Ways of Being* (2004) (Fig. 17) Lassnig depicted three images of herself next to one another in a single imaginary space. For Lassnig, the body is never simply one thing but is rather a source for endless expression.[86] With each version of herself, Lassnig treated the figure with varied approaches to line and color resulting in the different poses and shapes of the figures. Despite the figures representing Lassnig's sensations, they appear strange, distorted, or even alien-like. The space in which these figures are situated is imaginary. In this work, as well as in other body-awareness paintings, Lassnig created a realm from the imagination in which she could render her sensations and emotions.[87] As described in the title of the work, each figure represents a different way of being from Lassnig's first-person perspective. In a 1970 journal entry about body-awareness, Lassnig wrote, "You can become aware of your body through pressure, through tension, or by straining one part of it in a particular physical position; in other words, awareness is expressed in sensations of pressure or tension, in sensations of fullness or emptiness, etc."[88] The possibility for multiple realities, multiple ways of being, owes itself to the constant flux that characterizes human.[89] Constant change generates endless sources for new body-awareness painting. For its inexhaustible potential, Lassnig found body-awareness to be an ideal artistic activity.[90]

In her paintings and in her short-animated films, Lassnig often explored femininity, masculinity, the relation between the sexes. In Lassnig's work, the difference between the sexes is blatant. Even if they are depicted as distressed, sad, or in emotion turmoil, the women in Lassnig's paintings are never weak.[91] In *Woman Laocoön* (1976) (Fig. 18) Lassnig's figure is enveloped by a green serpent. The struggle to liberate herself from the snake is evident as Lassnig's body dissolves into the background, but despite the struggle Lassnig appears strong and heroic. From the title of this painting it is clear that Lassnig was making an intentional reference to the ancient statue of Laocoön and His Sons (Fig. 19). By inserting herself in the place of Laocoön, Lassnig associates herself with ancient history and takes on the role of a tragic mythological figure. Characteristic of her paintings made while living in New York, the acid-green background situates her figure in an imaginary space.

In the provocative self-portrait *You or Me* (2005) (Fig. 20) Lassnig depicted herself nude with a gun in each hand. With one gun pointed against her own head and the other pointed out towards the view, Lassnig's facial expression is frantic. Exposed and defenseless, the skin on Lassnig's face and body sags from old age and a thick blue line surrounds her body like a

shadow. Lassnig once stated, "When I am painting, almost everything is allowed… I *want* to paint things that are uncomfortable."[92] In the direct outward confrontation, this work is highly dramatic and uncomfortable. Hair, as an appendix of the body than cannot feel sensation, was left out of this composition as with other body-awareness paintings. Central to Lassnig's theory of body-awareness is physical awareness.[93] In the moment of conflicted depicted in *You or Me,* Lassnig threatens her own capacity to access her bodily sensations with the possibility of death.

Lassnig depicts her aging body in many body-awareness paintings. In *Self-Portrait with Brush* (2010-2013) (Fig. 21) Lassnig presented herself in the act of painting. Unfinished, the painting exhibits the difficulty of the laborious task of painting for the aging body. Jennifer Higgie observed that in her late life, Lassnig continued to ask important and complicated questions about our relationship to our bodies. Higgie writes, "Even in old age, Lassnig is never nostalgic of complacent in her pictures. She continues to ask questions:… of how to continue to live in a body in which you have lived all your life and which will eventually kill you."[94] In the 20th century, artists increasingly looked at their bodies and reflected on the phenomena of aging. While modern artists were the first to take note of their bodies changing over time, some artists reflected old old-age in other ways in self-portraiture. Notably, Rembrandt created self-portraits throughout his lifetime, altogether documenting his changing appearance from a young man into his advanced years. Alice Neel, an artist who has become revered for her nude portraits, turned her attention towards herself for a nude self-portrait in her late career. She executed the self-portrait in her distinctive style and depicts herself at work with a brush in hand. In *Self-Portrait* (1980) (fig. 21) Neel portrayed herself at age eighty. She is seated in a chair, but appears prepared to jump back up to the canvas at any moment to continue working on the self-portrait.[95] Neel's skin sags naturally off her worn body. She portrayed herself honestly and confronted her aging body as it really was without reservation. Neel believed that nudity had the power to tie the viewer more closely to the sitter and therefore served an important purpose in the painting.[96] By working under the same principles when creating her own self-portrait as with portraits, Neel opened herself up to the viewer hoping to create an authentic connection.

Like Neel, Lucian Freud was an established painter of nude portraits. In 1993, Freud created a self-portrait titled *Painter Working, Reflection* (Fig. 23). In this image, Freud wears only a pair of unlaced work boots to capture his self-portrait at the age of seventy. Presenting a full-frontal nude, Freud does not shy away from rendering his body. In fact, by evidence of the

rough, thick paint of the face from constant reworking it seems as though the facial expression proved to be the most challenging aspect of the work.[97] After years of painting nude portraits, Freud stated, "Now the very least I can do is paint myself naked."[98] Why did both Neel and Freud choose to create nude self-portraits at such a late point in their careers? Perhaps, the two chose to take on the task of the nude self-portraits at the point in which their style had been fully developed intentionally. Although aged, their bodies appear resilient and dignified as the artists create self-portraits in the style which they have developed in confidence over many years of experimentation and mastery of their medium. Both Neel and Freud treat themselves like their other sitters. The dynamic between nude models and the artist can prove to be troublesome, creating dynamics of power. By taking up the role of the nude model, Neel and Freud put themselves in the same scenario and subjected themselves to the same gaze as their models, thus bringing about an equality between all parties. These nude self-portraits both function as a continuation of their practice as nude portraitists and equalize them with all their past sitters.

The exploration of one's own body and its relationship with the world around it in self-portraiture in many ways predicted later art forms that took this very relationship to its extreme. In the late 1960s and 1970s, artists began to ask questions about their bodily experience by staging themselves as both the artist and the art object. Performance art, or body art, was characterized by a durational act that often-included nakedness and subjecting the body to risk, leaving the artist exposed and vulnerable.[99] Whether performing in front of an audience, on the street, or for a camera, the presence of the artist reinforced the raw authenticity of the action taking place. By taking the self as the material, performance artists present, rather than represent, their physical and emotional experience.

Born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, Marina Abramović explores endurance, intimacy, and pain in her performances. In *Rhythm 0* (1975) (Fig. 24), Abramović placed 72 objects on a table, including a gun, a rose, and a bullet, and allowed the audience to use the items on her body without any resistance.[100] "I am the object," stated Abramović, "During this period I take full responsibility."[101] Testing the audience's humanity and the limits of her own body, Abramović experienced pain, humiliation, and fear as the audience tore off her clothes, smeared makeup on her face, and put the loaded gun to her head. While artists such as Kahlo reflected on psychological and physical pain by depicting trauma and distress, Abramović explored these themes by actually undergoing painful experiences in her work.

Self-portraits and performance intersect more directly in Abramvoić's later work titled *The Artist is Present* (2010) (Fig. 25). Abramović debuted this work in 2010 as part of a retrospective of her work held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. For the entire duration of the exhibition, so long as the museum was open the artist would literally be present. Abramović envisioned the piece to contain 'no story, no object, just pure presence.'[102] For the performance, Abramović would sit on one chair in utter silence across from another chair during all operating hours that the museum. Audience members were invited to sit in the chair opposite from Abramović, at which point she would lift her head to engage the individual with her gaze. The two would interact in this way until the audience member stood and walked away, at which point Abramović would again lower her head to reset for her next participant. Historically, the gaze has been a focus of self-portraits and portraits alike, and Abramović used this as a central feature of the performance. According the exhibition curator Klaus Biesenbach, this seminal work by Marina Abramović is a self-portrait.[103]

The artists examined in this chapter confront elements of their own embodied existence in self-portraiture with a profound directness that is also found in many works of performance art. In her body-awareness paintings, Lassnig generated a new vocabulary of expression based on perception and sensation, a reality which she believed to be most truly in her possession. Like Schiele, Lassnig often divorces her figures from the observable world and isolates them in a space which she creates in her work. Schiele, Modersohn-Becker, Kahlo, Lassnig, Neel, and Freud all asked the question, 'How and why do I depict myself in relation to my body?" Although the nude has been a subject of art history for generations, its lack of presence in self-portraiture has prevented artists from exploring critical aspects of their condition. As seen in the works of these artists, the physical body is central for the exploration of topics such as human sexuality, femininity and masculinity, mortality, sensation, and perception. In only its first century of being a distinct type within the genre, the nude self-portrait has already found its way to be an important aspect of modern self-portraiture.

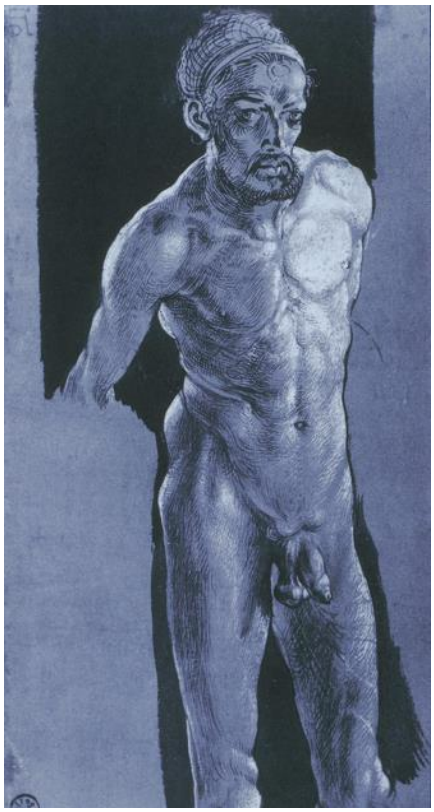

Fig. 1, Albrecht Dürer, Self-Portrait Nude, c. 1518

Fig. 2, Egon Schiele, *Self-Portrait,* 1910. Pencil, watercolor and paint. Graphische Sammlung Albertina. *ArtStor. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000677862.*

Fig. 3, Egon Schiele, *The Yellow Nude,* 1910. Watercolor. Black chalk, water color and body color on paper. Leopold Museum. *ArtStor. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/LESSING_ART_10310120000*

Fig. 4, *Self-Portrait Masturbating,* 1911. Pencil and watercolor. Graphische Sammlung Albertina. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000922847.

Fig. 5, Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, *Self Portrait in a Straw Hat*, after 1782. Oil on canvas. National Gallery (London). *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ANGLIG_10313767090

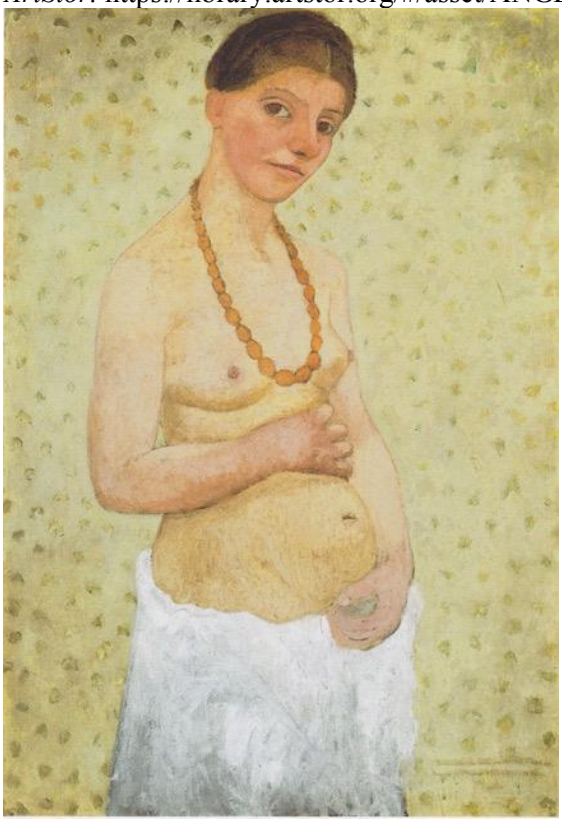

Fig. 6, Paula Modersohn-Becker, *Self-Portrait, Age 30, 6th Wedding Day,* 1906. Radycki, J. Diane. Paula Modersohn-Becker: The First Modern Woman Artist. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. 200.

Fig. 7, Gustave Klimt, *Hope I,* 1903.Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Canada. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AMCADIG_10310847914

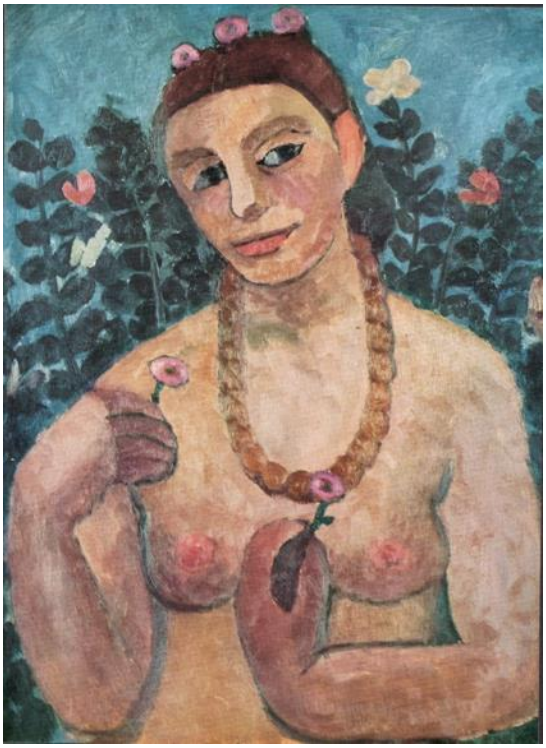

Fig. 8, Paula Moderesohn-Becker, *Amber Necklace, Half length, II,* 1906. Oil on canvas. Kuntsmuseum (Basel). *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AWSS35953_35953_31707251.

Fig, 9, Photograph of Paula Modersohn-Becker in her Studio, 1906. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000666717.

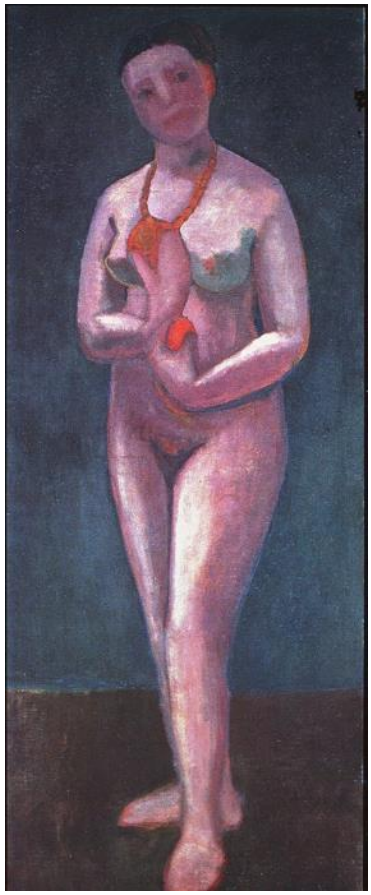

Fig. 10, Paula Modersohn-Becker, *Large Standing Self-Portrait Nude,* 1906. Oil on canvas. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000667277.

Fig. 11, Edouard Manet, *Olympia,* 1863-65. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/LESSING_ART_1039490311.

Fig. 12, Frida Kahlo, *My Birth,* 1932. Oil on sheet metal. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ABARNITZ_10310366741

Fig. 13, Frida Kahlo, *Henry Ford Hospital*, 1932. Oil on sheet metal. Museum of Frida Kahlo. *ArtStor*. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000977155

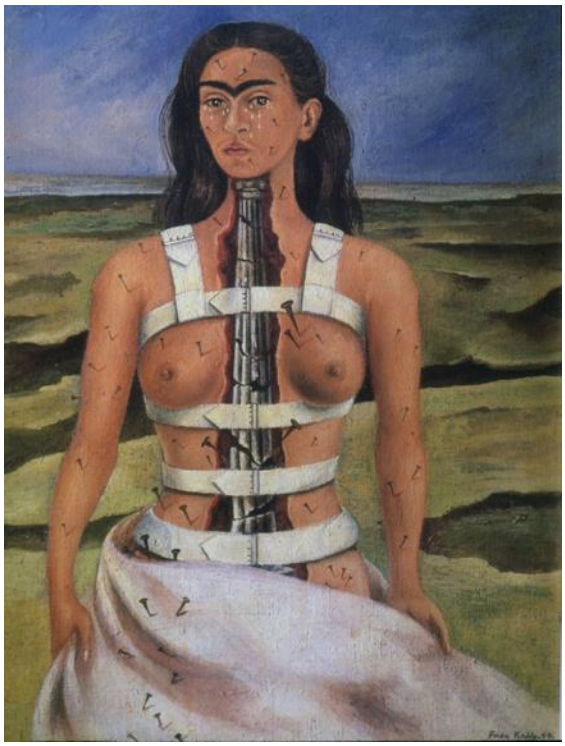

Fig. 14, Frida Kahlo, *The Broken Column,* 1944. Oil on Masonite. Museo Dolores Olmeda. *ArtStor*. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AIC_810034

Fig. 15, Maria Lassnig, *Selbstportrait im Garten* (Self-Portrait in the Garden), 1961. Watercolor on paper. *Maria Lassnig: Ways of Being.* Edited by Beatrice von Bormann, Antonia Hoerschelmann, and Klaus Albrecht Schröder, Munich, Germany: Amsterdam, Netherlands: Vienna, Austria: Hirmer; Stedelijk Museum; Albertina, 2019. 18

Fig. 16, Maria Lassnig, *Dame mit Hirn (Lady with Brain)*, 1990 – 1999. *Maria Lassnig: Ways of Being.* Edited by Beatrice von Bormann, Antonia Hoerschelmann, and Klaus Albrecht Schröder, Munich, Germany: Amsterdam, Netherlands: Vienna, Austria: Hirmer; Stedelijk Museum; Albertina, 2019.

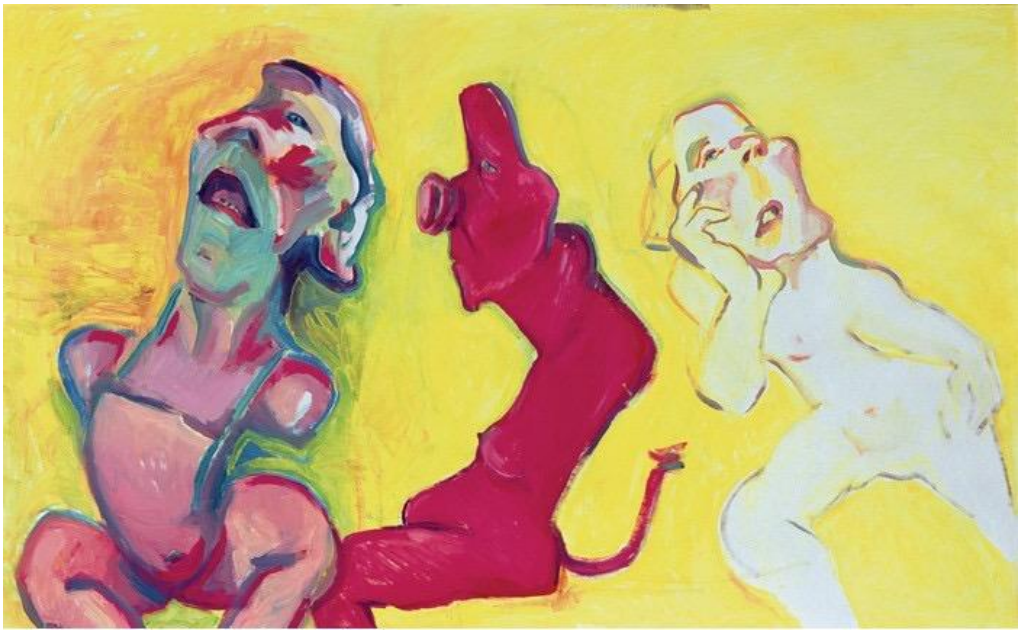

Fig. 17, Maria Lassnig, *3 Arten zu Sein (Three Ways of Being)*, 2004. Oil on canvas. *Maria Lassnig*. Edited by Helmut Friedel, 35-46. Berlin, Germany: Distanz, 2010.

Fig. 18, Maria Lassnig, *Woman Laocoön,* 1976. Oil on canvas. *Maria Lassnig*. Edited by Helmut Friedel, 35-46. Berlin, Germany: Distanz, 2010.

Fig. 19, Laocoön and his Sons, 50-25 BC. Marble. Museo Vatico. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AWSS35953_35953_31685599

Fig. 20, Maria Lassnig, *You or Me*, 2005. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/656518.

Fig. 21, Maria Lassnig, *Self-Portrait with Brush,* 2010-2013. Oil on canvas. *Maria Lassnig: Ways of Being.* Edited by Beatrice von Bormann, Antonia Hoerschelmann, and Klaus Albrecht Schröder, Munich, Germany: Amsterdam, Netherlands: Vienna, Austria: Hirmer; Stedelijk Museum; Albertina, 2019.

Fig. 22, Alice Neel, *Self-Portrait*, 1980. Oil on canvas. National Portrait Gallery (Washington, DC) https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.85.19

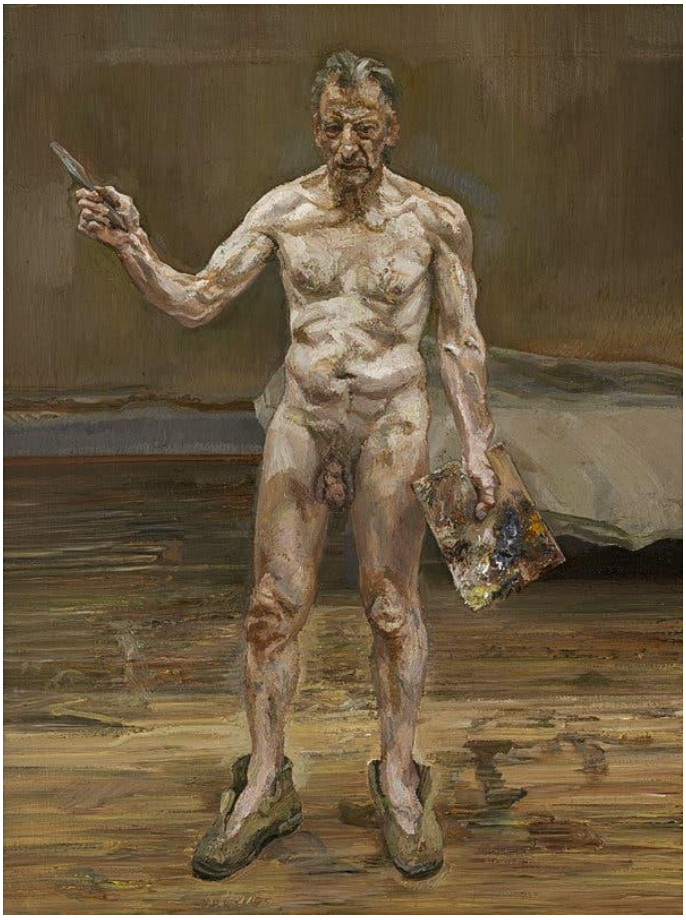

Fig. 23, Lucian Freud, *Painter Working, Reflection,* 1993. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000561454.

Fig. 24, Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 0,* 1974. Studio Mona Gallery. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822001480795

Fig. 25, Marina Abramović, *The Artist is Present,* 2010. Museum of Modern Art. https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/964

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Photograph of Frida Kahlo, *ArtStor, https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000976959*

Chapter Three

A self-portrait is a statement of identity. When creating a self-portrait, artists are presented with choices as to how the self-portrait will relate to and represent themselves. In the catalogue for the 1976 exhibition *Modern Portraits: The Self & Others* Kirk Varnedoe argued that the heightened sense of self-consciousness that constitutes the modern artist results in a higher artifice, rather than openness, in their presentation in their self-portraits.[1] The artificiality, however, does not function to close-off or deny access to the artist in their self-portraits. By adopting different roles, disguising oneself, or performing different personas in self-portraits, artists reveal select aspects of their own identity. Whether one puts on a mask or wears symbolic clothing, their choices subtlety reflects aspects of their identity. In this chapter, artists from the turn of the century until the 1980s will be considered, beginning with James Ensor and ending with Cindy Sherman to consider the ways that identity is constructed and presented in self-portraits. While artists practicing at the dawn of the new century like Ensor and Picasso demonstrate the search for personal identity by constructing a vision for themselves on canvas, later artists become concerned with the intersection of personal and social identity. Claude Cahun, Frida Kahlo, and Adrian Piper look towards themselves to reflect on categories such as gender, race, class, and nationality. Finally, Cindy Sherman, whose photographs are not self-portraits, demonstrates a method of using herself to investigate identity without speaking directly of her personal identity. These artists collectively demonstrate that identity is not fixed, thereby undermining the legitimacy of social categories and providing the freedom for self-definition.

The Belgian painter James Ensor (1860-1949) made many self-portraits in his lifetime, most of which depict Ensor disguised, adopting an alter-ego, or role-playing. With each self-portrait, Ensor created a new identity, evading any singular notion of himself. Ensor, named 'the painter of masks' by poet Émile Verhaeren, often incorporated an entourage of masked figures in his paintings and drawings, including several of his self-portraits.[2] Growing up in the seaside town of Ostend, Ensor would have witnessed parades of masked people during the carnival season when bourgeoise visitors flocked to the resort town for the festivities. For his entire life, Ensor lived overtop his grandparent's curiosity shop that was stocked with all sorts of novelties,

including a selection of masks for the annual celebration occurring just before Lent.[3] The social and visual culture of Ostend provided the foundation for the world Ensor created in his art.

During his early career Ensor was associated with the avant-garde group Les Vingt, a group who rejected a singular style and promoted freedom of artistic expression.[4] An important stylistic shift occurred for Ensor when he left behind a dark palette and descriptive colors in favor for purer, expressive color.[5] Anna Swinbourne argues that this shift in style signaled a new mode of operating from the 'pure imagination.'[6] Although decisively a modern painter, Ensor looked back to learn from artists of the past such as Rembrandt, Turner, Delacroix, Daumier, Manet, and Callot, whose paintings he would copy and study from books.[7] Ensor praised the "excessive inventions" of Hieronymus Bosch and Frans Hals and admitted to preferring these artists over the more popular Flemish masters.[8] Ensor shared the view with his contemporary Wilhelm Bürger, a prominent art critic and art historian, that of the past masters Rembrandt and Hals were truly artists of the future who operated with a certain artistic freedom.[9] In his self-portraits, Ensor demonstrated artistic freedom with his inventive style and by creating multiple identities, which effectively concealed his true identity.

In *Self-Portrait with a Flowered Hat (My Portrait Disguised)* (1883/1888) (Fig. 1), Ensor presented a typical self-portrait with several peculiar features. Ensor originally painted this work in 1883 without the brightly-colored, flamboyant hat and striking handle-bar moustache. Ensor added these features in 1888 when he returned to retouch the painting.[10] These additions, especially the vibrant hat that was overlaid onto the dark background, demonstrate the stylistic shift that Ensor underwent between 1883 and 1889. The flowered hat is based on the hat which adorns the head of Elizabeth Vigée Le Brun in her *Self-Portrait* from 1782, which itself is borrowed from a painting by the Flemish master Peter Paul Rubens.[11] To a knowing audience, this reference would be understood as Ensor identifying himself with the two artists, positioning himself as an inheritor of their art historic tradition. Furthermore, the hat which Ensor selected has distinctly feminine associations. As mentioned above, the other feature that Ensor added to his self-portrait was a handle-bar moustache, a distinctly masculine attribute. Worn on the same person, the feminine hat and masculine mustache disguise Ensor and create a puzzling ambiguity.[12] Simultaneously disguised and claiming identity through association with past artists, the elusive nature of Ensor in his self-portraits is exemplified in this work. Especially noteworthy, this self-portrait was the only one that Ensor exhibited before the year 1900.[13] It was

a shown in the Salon des Vingts in 1890, just a year after the revisions were made.[14] With this in mind, Ensor seems to have disguised himself specifically in preparation for this exhibition, deliberately fashioning his identity by claiming his association with well-known artists as he exhibited his self-portrait for the first time.

In *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (1888) (Fig. 2), Ensor portrayed himself as Christ triumphantly riding through the streets of Brussels on a donkey flanked by a crowd of masked figures and recognizable public or historic figures. In 1877 Ensor went to Brussels for formal training and became involved with the avant-garde and intellectual circles of the city. He returned just three years later to his hometown of Ostend, a city famous for hosting parades and festivals frequented by the political and social elites of Belgium.[15] His experience with city life in Brussels and in the resort town of Ostend dually inspired this work. In the painting, a banner flies high above the crowd proclaiming "Vive la Sociale." At once a self-portrait, a social critique, and a political critique, Ensor appears as the antagonized savior of the modern world. According to James Hall, in Ensor's work masks signify the alienation of modern bourgeoise society and its repressive conditions.[16] In his self-portraits, Ensor constantly perpetuated the idea of himself as an outsider that was antagonized by modern society.[17] By adopting the role of Christ, Ensor painted himself a modern-day martyr who is simultaneously persecuted by society and superior to society.[18] Ensor identified with Christ and martyrs in other works, such as the work on paper titled *Calvary* (Fig. 3) from 1886 in which Ensor depicted himself as Christ at the time of crucifixion. By adopting the personae of Christ in *Christ's Entry into Brussels,* Ensor was able to reveal aspects of his own experience and expose deeper truths about the condition of modern society. Ensor began this work in 1888 with the intention of exhibiting it with Les Vingts in 1889, but it was not finished in time for the group show.[19] It was, however, included in the catalogue for the exhibition.[20] Despite having many opportunities to exhibit this monumental work in various group shows and solo exhibitions in the following years, Ensor did not exhibit *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* publicly until 1929 in Paris.[21] Perhaps this choice was made in fear of critical reception, for its personal significance may be suggested by Ensor's choice to keep this painting until the end of his life.

Roughly a decade after creating *Self-Portrait with a Flowered Hat*, Ensor created *Self-Portrait with Masks* (1899) (Fig. 4). In this work Ensor inserted himself with the same hat and handlebar mustache as seen in *Self-Portrait with Flowered Hat,* only this time he is engulfed in a

sea of masks. Ensor appears paralyzed among the crowd of grimacing, crying, and laughing faces as he looks across his shoulder towards the viewer.[22] Despite not covering his face with a mask like the figures around him, Ensor is disguised under the flowery hat. Ensor once stated, "I've tried several times to paint my portrait, but I've never managed to capture the resemblance."[23] From painting to painting, Ensor reworked his image either disguised, in an alternate persona, or caricatured. In one whimsical drawing titled *Peculiar Insects* (1888) (Fig. 5), Ensor imposed his features on a bug. By refusing to capture his likeness in these self-portraits, Ensor was able to maintain freedom from the hypocrisy of the contemporary world that he continuously criticized in satirical cartoons.[24] *Self-Portrait with Masks,* like most of his self-portraits, was not exhibited publicly. Rather, Ensor sold it privately just one year after he made it to private buyers, Dr. and Mrs. Lambotte.

The skeleton was an alter-ego used by Ensor in many of his self-portraits and is often considered a counter-part to the mask. For *The Skeleton Painter* (1895 or 1896) (Fig. 6) Ensor used a photograph of himself in his studio but replaced his figure with a skeleton.[25] After the death of his father and grandmother in 1887, two important figures in his life, Ensor began to incorporate the skeleton in his works, frequently addressing issues of death.[26] With a single mask at the figure's feet, it makes one wonder if the masked figures in Ensor's other works have a face underneath after all, or if the masks have become their true face and behind them are merely skulls. In Ensor's work, the fine line between mask and face often can become blurred and one could be mistaken for the other.[27] The skeleton itself does not give us any information about the artist's identity. The skeleton is associated with the human as such, and in its generality resists identification with any single individual. Yet, we know this skeleton to be Ensor by looking beyond his figure and into the studio filled wall-to-wall with his works. By rendering himself as a skeleton, perhaps this painting further points towards another aspect of his identity, his paintings. These paintings will serve to represent Ensor for generations long after his mortal death, perhaps even functioning as yet another mask.

As Ensor shapeshifted throughout his many self-portraits, he constantly remade himself and resisted a single characterization. In his use of masks in his self-portraits to portray the Other in works like *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*, Ensor's works became sharp social critiques of the alienation felt by the self in modern society. Like his contemporary Paul Gauguin, Ensor felt as though he was persecuted and antagonized by modern society. Both artists communicated

this suffering in their self-portraits by rendering themselves as Christ. Gauguin and Ensor were aware of one another and even exhibited together at the Salon des Vingts in 1889, the year that Ensor was due to exhibit *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*.[28] Despite not completing the painting in time for the show, it was included in the exhibition checklist.[29] Later that year, Gauguin created *Christ on the Mount of Olives* (1889), a self-portrait discussed in Chapter One in which Gauguin portrays himself as Christ. In light of this connection, it is possible that Gauguin may have been influenced by Ensor to adopt the alter-ego of Christ and create his painting, as Gauguin too positioned himself to be similarly persecuted by critics and the public. It was perhaps this criticism that caused Ensor to avoid revealing his true self in his self-portraits, feeling as though this sort of exposure would leave him vulnerable to the society which he so vehemently criticized. After breaking with Les Vingts in 1893, Ensor became increasingly private as he lived and work in his apartment above the curiosity shop in Ostend. For such a private person, it may seem peculiar that Ensor created 112 self-portraits over the course of his lifetime. However, as has been demonstrated, most of these self-portraits were rarely exhibited and often disguised Ensor by masking his true identity. The painter of masks, Ensor revealed in his self-portraits that identity is not to be taken for granted or understood as straight-forward, but is rather elusive and difficult to grasp.

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) made a number of self-portraits throughout his career, rendering himself through different periods of intense stylistic and formal experimentation. The variety of self-portraits created by Picasso reject any notion that personal *or* artistic identity must be singular. Making most of his self-portraits in his early career, Picasso's constant reworking of his self-image may reflect his desire to create a name for himself in the Parisian avant-garde in the hills of Montmartre. In both paintings and caricatures, Picasso projected a range of self-references onto characters such as harlequins, minotaurs, and musketeers, assuming these characters as alter-egos.[30] Picasso experimented heavily with his appearance as a young man and constantly reworked both his self-portrait and his physical appearance, reflecting his relentless search for personal style.[31] Both Kahlo and Cahun also carried out stylistic experimentation, altering their appearance in costume and through hairstyle. In his self-portraits, like his other paintings and drawings, Picasso did not seek to observe or record himself, but rather sought to control, transform, and reinvent himself in his art.[32] For Picasso, the self-portrait was a way to experiment with both his identity and formal style. Picasso refuted the idea of an artistic

progression and argued that all art exists in the present. With the various identities presented in his self-portraits existing all at once, Picasso disrupts the conception of a united self. Each self-portrait presents one of the many different identities and personas of Picasso which all exist in simultaneity.

As a young artist in Paris, Picasso experimented with self-portrait drawings before taking up the subject in painting. A proficient caricaturist, Picasso would fill up journals with cartoons of the people of Paris, reinventing them on the pages.[33] Despite his exceptional technical skill when it came to draftsmanship, Picasso's difficulty with drawing himself can be discerned when comparing self-portrait sketches to other caricatures. Kirk Varnedoe argued that of his many self-caricatures from his early years, *Self-Portrait in Front of the Moulin Rouge* (1901) (Fig. 7) was the most elaborate.[34] While in other caricatures Picasso shields his face with shadows or a coat collar, Picasso finally offers a complete picture of himself in *Self-Portrait in Front of the Moulin Rouge*. Picasso presented himself posed before the Moulin Rouge with his easel and materials, positing himself as the *artiste-peintre par excellence*.[35] Picasso's clothing, materials, and surrounding are significant in demonstrating that Picasso constructed his identity in a specifically social context. Drawing himself wandering the streets of Montmartre with an easel in hand, Picasso configured himself as a serious painter, an identity he would hope to assume in real life in the city of Paris.

In 1901, Picasso painted his self-portrait three times with a newly developed sense of self-confidence.[36] In *Yo, Picasso* (1901) (Fig. 8), Picasso depicted himself in a bright white shirt and gaslight colors against a dark black background.[37] From a sketch, one can observe that Picasso originally intended to show himself at work at the easel but abandoned this feature for the final painting. The scene appears nocturnal, signaling Picasso's association with the tantalizing realm of Parisian nightlife that was depicted by prominent urban artists such as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.[38] The loose brushstroke and vivid color create an energy that is matched by Picasso's wide-open eyes that lock gaze with the viewer. The young Picasso appears charismatic and charming. Listed as the first work of art in the catalogue for Picasso's debut exhibition at Ambroise Vollard's Paris gallery in the summer of 1901, it is clear that this self-portrait was made with the intention to be shown to an audience.[39] With nearly half the paintings from this exhibition selling, Picasso was able to gain recognition as a new artist in town. The upper left corner of the self-portrait was inscribed, "Yo, Picasso," or, "I, Picasso." In this moment, Picasso

precociously announced himself to the art world of Paris. Perhaps one of the first works in which Picasso signs only his surname, Picasso asserted a central component of his artistic identity, branding himself simply, *Picasso.*

Another self-portrait made in 1901 was *Self-Portrait in a Top Hat* (Fig. 9). This work on paper similarly points to Picasso as an active member of the dazzling Parisian nightlife. Surrounded by prostitutes, Picasso portrayed himself as a bourgeoise, top-headed dandy, an even more direct reference to Toulouse-Lautrec. Similar to his self-portrait caricature in front of the Moulin Rouge, Picasso identified himself within the broader social context of turn-of-the-century Paris. The loose, expressionist brushwork used by Picasso recalls Van Gogh, another foreigner who briefly participated in the Parisian avant-garde and a prominent self-portraitist discussed in Chapter One.[40]

After his exhibition at Vollard's galley, Picasso endured the tragic loss of his good friend, the poet Carles Casagemas. By the time of his death, Picasso had already begun experimenting with his style and subject matter, but this event triggered a more dramatic shift into his Blue Period.[41] Rendered in a monochromatic palette, the tone of *Self-Portrait* (1901) (Fig. 9) changed radically from the energetic charisma of *Yo, Picasso* to a somber stillness. Picasso's grim, pale face appears ghoulish with his eyes now appearing to carry a piercing sense of self-scrutiny.[42] Picasso kept this self-portrait for his entire life, believing it marked an important transition as an artist from the urbane observer to a painter that took on weightier themes and timeless principles.[43] Compared to the identity presented in his other self-portraits from 1901, Picasso no longer portrayed himself explicitly in relation to city life or as an urbane artist. Standing solid, bathed in blue, the psychologically charged painting seems to parallel the self-portraits of Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Munch, who were all associated through exposure to the Parisian avant-garde circles. This was the only self-portrait painting that Picasso completed during the Blue Period, the first of many periods defined by prolonged formal and stylistic experimentation and development.

Emerging from the Blue Period in 1904, Picasso created another self-portrait, this time assuming the role of a harlequin. In *At the Lapin Agile* (1905) (Fig. 10) Picasso positioned himself once again as a man of the city. No longer swept up in the lively parties of the Parisian nightlife, Picasso placed himself amongst outcasts and lowlifes, tending to a glass of absinthe at the Lapin Agile bar on the Butte de Montmartre.[44] At the time, absinthe was a drink associated

with the creative intellectuals and bohemian circles of Paris that was simultaneously recognized for its ability to bring about melancholy and depression.[45] The harlequin, a character that Picasso would adopt throughout his career as both a stock character and for self-representation, was derived from the famous *commedia dell'arte.* The appearance of members of this group in visual culture is common, with members of the troop depicted by artists such as Watteau and Daumier.[46] Dressed in a distinct costume with a diamond-pattern, Picasso performs when he takes on the role of the harlequin. The painting was made for the owner of the Lapin Agile, Frédé, who is pictured in the background playing the guitar, would occasionally accept works of art in exchange for a meal for his customers.[47] This self-portrait was made to be seen by an audience of fellow painters, models, poets, and other bohemians who frequented the bar at Butte de Montmartre.

From 1905-1906, Picasso was searching for a new formal vocabulary. After shifting from the Blue to Rose Period, Picasso was still looking for a new way to reinvent the world around him. Exemplified by sketches from this time, Picasso began experimenting with figurative drawing. These drawings show that Picasso was attempting to simplify forms to represent the human body and reducing apparent differences such as sex and age.[48] Identity, insofar as it refers to what uniquely belongs to oneself, is too being reduced in this process to its bare minimum. Picasso focused on reducing human features, as accomplished in "primitive" sculpture, to move towards a uniform vocabulary. A posthumous exhibition of the work of Gauguin, an artist similarly obsessed with "primitive", was taking place in Paris at this time and it is likely that it would have been seen by Picasso.[49] Despite a shared fanaticism for the primitive, Picasso's interests diverged from those of Gauguin. Rather than attempting to portray the primitive by using vibrant and expressive color, Picasso was driven by its purely sculptural qualities.[50] Using reductive techniques, Picasso created a series of studies for *Self-Portrait with Palette* (1906) (Fig. 11). In these studies, one observes a variety of poses that Picasso was positing for the final work, one such being the direction of his gaze. One choice hides his eyes, while the other left them open but looking off to the distance.

In *Self-Portrait with Palette* (1906) (Fig. 12), Picasso chose a gaze that would still reveal his eyes, now impenetrable and looking off into the distance. Picasso's exaggerated facial features such as his almond-shaped eyes, chin tucked into his neck, and the thick black outline that designates his jaw all contribute to his face's mask-like appearance. Although the studies for

this painting depict him with a brush in hand, Picasso removed this feature from the finished picture, suggesting his true talent as an artist went beyond mere technique.[51] His clothing identifies him as a painter, but in this instance, they refer to him as a worker-painter rather than the previously performed *artiste-peintre par excellence*.[52] Significantly, this self-portrait was based off the self-portrait by Cézanne that Meyer Schapiro designates his most impersonal.[53] In this work, Picasso also created a divide between himself and the viewer that denies access to his inner-life. Moreover, this self-portrait which was created by systematically reducing forms anticipates Picasso's most impersonal stage, Cubism.

The final self-portrait Picasso made before giving up the genre for nearly ten years was *Self-Portrait* (1907) (Fig. 13). According to Varnedoe, this self-portrait stands alongside the work that is often considered its competitive counterpart, Matisse's *Portrait of Madame Matisse/ The Green Line* (1905) (Fig. 14) as, "Early modern art's most radical renegotiations of the terms of collaboration between abstract invention and physiognomic description."[54] In this image, the sculptural qualities of his self-portrait from 1906 are reduced to a flat, unmodulated plane composed of geometric shapes and bold lines.[55] The decision to use flattened, geometric shapes was influenced by the technique of Paul Cézanne, whose artwork was being shown just one year after his death at the 1907 Salon d'Automne.[56] In the same year, a letter from Cézanne to Emile Bernard was published which said, "Treat nature by means of cylinder, sphere, and cone."[57] In this self-portrait, Picasso took this advice and transformed his face into geometric shapes. Triangles, including the one created on Picasso's forehead by his angular hairstyle, and V-shapes dominate the composition and striking a balance and creating visual harmony.[58] The hairstyle depicted here was adopted by Picasso from this point forward, becoming an essential feature of his identity until a symbolic cutting of his forelock took place when he was middle aged.[59] This angular mode of representing the human figure was adopted by Picasso for the rendering of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* created in the same year. Perhaps Picasso used himself as a model to test the waters for his new style of painting. After 1907, Picasso and Braque dove headfirst into their Cubist period, leaving self-portraiture behind for an entire decade.

Picasso's many self-portraits during his early career represent the many different identities that he constructed, yet in no single work can be found the 'true Picasso'. Shifting from playing the role of artiste-peintre to workman-painter, a top-hatted dandy to a melancholy harlequin, Picasso took advantage of these roles to project a trait or to communicate a

characteristic that he wants others to believe he possesses. Most of the identities adopted by Picasso were significant in relation to the Parisian social world at the turn of the twentieth century, exemplifying the critical role society plays in determining identity. Notably, with each new identity, Picasso rendered himself in a distinct formal style, rarely creating self-portrait paintings from the same formal period. In fact, most of these self-portraits were made just as he was experimenting with a new style. This choice suggests that each stylistic phase of Picasso's early years is a critical aspects of Picasso's identity. Picasso's many changing appearances were performative, as Picasso experimented with his role as artist.

Claude Cahun (1894-1954) was a French artist, writer, political activist, and actor who has become known for her photographs that questioned fixed ideas of identity. In both her autobiography and self-portraits, Cahun explored the instability and fluidity of gender and issues of femininity, both subjects that was taken up critically during the second half of the twentieth century. After her death, Cahun's work was lost for nearly half a century until her photographs were rediscovered and recognized as important investigations of the self and gender. From one photograph to the next, Cahun performed different characters making it impossible to identify one single version of the artist. In referring to Cahun, the question of appropriate pronouns to refer to her is valid and open to discussion. Because Cahun alternated between masculine and feminine pronouns when referring to herself and did not designate a specific preference, this account will follow the lead of recent scholarship and she will be referred in the remainder of the chapter with feminine pronouns. By shifting gender in her photographs and writing, Cahun subverts traditional notions of gender and femininity rebelling against any fixed notion of woman, or identity in general. [60]

Born in Nantes to a wealthy literary family, Cahun began experimenting with photography and self-portraiture as a teenager.[61] While in Paris, Cahun became involved in Surrealist circles, yet did not exhibit her work in any group exhibitions. Cahun published two photomontages and one self-portrait in the Surrealist magazine *Bifur*, but the remainder of her self-portraiture either remained private or was self-published as a component of her autobiography. Born Lucy Schwob, she adopted the unisex name Claude Cahun as she began her career in Paris. She experimented with different pseudonym's while publishing, first adopting Claude Courlis until finally arriving at the name Claude Cahun.[62] Claude, an androgynous name, is ripe with ambiguity, giving Cahun the agency to take on either gender or neither gender at any

given time. Her life partner and step-sister, Suzanne Malherbe, also changed her name to be gender-neutral, choosing Marcel Moore. In addition to a personal partnership, Moore was Cahun's artistic partner, and the pair collaborated in making photographs and photomontages.[63] As an almost inseparable pair, Cahun would describe Moore as "l'autre moi," or, "the other me."[64] Considering that most of Cahun's self-portraits went unpublished in her lifetime, Moore would have been the sole audience member for whom Cahun was performing.[65]

Cahun was influenced by the theories of Havelock Ellis, the English theorist who suggested the possibility of a third sex that was neither masculine or feminine but rather one that brought together the possibilities of both.[66] Cahun was the first translator of Havelock's theories from English to French, absorbing the ideas in the process.[67] In her autobiography, *Aveux mon avenues* (or *Cancelled Confessions),* Cahun shifts gender constantly, employing both masculine and feminine adjectives and articles. "Shuffle the cards," she writes," Masculine? Feminine? It depends on the situation. Neuter is the only gender that always suits me."[68] This attitude towards gender as ambiguous is reflected in her self-portrait photographs such as in *Self-Portrait* (1921) (Fig. 15) where Cahun presented herself dressed in a tuxedo and a shaved head. In her use of conventionally masculine dress and hair-styling, Cahun assumes a neither female nor male identity. In *Self-Portrait* (1927) (Fig. 16) Cahun slips into another costume, projecting a version of herself that is similarly ambiguous. As Cahun pouts towards the camera with painted lips, "I am in training don't kiss me," is written across Cahun's shirt between two dark circles emphasizing the erogenous zone of the nipples. Cahun's coy pose and done-up appearance has a performative quality to it reminiscent of *Cartes de visite*s. These small, affordable photographic portraits popularized in the 1880s in France.[69] In these images, sitters would often assume different costumes and escape the realities of their class, gender, or nationality.[70] In both of these self-portraits, unlike her photomontages, all of the theatrical effects are a result of staging and there was no manipulation of the photograph after it was taken.

Cahun's photographs, though performative, were most often tangential to her lived experience and social world.[71] In the 1920s in Paris, lesbian subcultures emerged with increasing visibility and traditional notions of femininity were challenged with the appearance of the "new woman". In his novel titled *La Garçonne,* Victor Margueritte announced the "new woman" with the distinguishing features of blurring gender and a sexual freedom that included homosexuality.[72] Although never claiming the identity of the "new woman," Cahun's gender-

blurring appearance in photographs and lifelong partnership with Malherbe seem to be associated in many ways with this concept. It is likely that even this identity of "new woman" would be too constraining, as Cahun sought to evade all forms of categorization.

In 1929, Cahun collaborated with Moore to create *Aveux mon avenues* (or *Cancelled Confessions),* an assemblage of autobiographical narratives, poems, recollections of dreams, and personal notes on identity.[73] In one of the ten sections, Cahun wrote, "'To mirror' and 'to stabilize'—these are words that have no business here."[74] In *Self-Portrait* (1928) (Fig. 17), Cahun presented a double-image of herself by posing adjacent to a mirror. Refusing to look into the mirror, Cahun turns toward the camera while her mirrored double looks out and away. In *Aveux mon avenues* Cahun wrote about Narcissus, who after falling in love with his own image was affected by the insufficiency of his gaze.[75] Cahun wrote, "The myth of Narcissus is everywhere. It haunts us. It has never ceased to inspire the things that make life perfect since the fateful day when that wave without wrinkles was captured."[76] Jennifer Shaw unpacked these sentences, writing that the phrase 'wave without ripples' refers to the impossibility of the ideal and the inevitability to fail in attempts to reach the ideal.[77] Working in the same cultural milieu, Cahun's description of Narcissus parallels the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror stage. Elizabeth Grosz summarizes the main points of the mirror-phase as follows:

> "The child sees itself as a unified totality, a *gestalt* in the mirror: it experiences itself in a schism, as a site of fragmentation. The child's identification with its specular image impels it nostalgically to seek out a past symbiotic completeness, even if such a state never existed… and to seek an anticipatory or desired (ideal or future) identity in the coherence of the totalized specular image. Lacan claims that the child is now enmeshed in a system of confused recognition/misrecognition… It is the dual, ambivalent relation to its own image that is central to Lacan's account of subjectivity… Lacan posits a divided, vacillating attitude that is incapable of final resolution. This "divided" notion of the self and the problem of self-recognition is crucial in so far as they may explain processes of social inculcation and positioning."[78]

Despite their similarities in their conceptions of recognition, Shaw argues that Cahun and Lacan have different aims in describing the relationship between the self and the image.[79]

Whereas Cahun takes the inadequacies of this relationship and turns them into self-acceptance and new possibilities in her photographs, Lacan did not find any resolution to this relationship of the self to the image.[80] In her photographs, Cahun does not strive towards the ideal or a hope of unity of self, but rather recognizes this fragmentation in each of her images by never clinging to a single identity.

Cahun collaborated with Moore to create photomontages to accompany *Aveux mon avenues.* Challenging conceptions of the self as a stable and fixed entity, Cahun emphasized the possibility for the subject to be deconstructed and reconstructed. In the photomontages created for *Aveux mon avenues* (Fig. 18), Cahun does this literally, cutting apart images of herself and reassembling them as a new image. In this photomontage, Cahun assembled multiple self-portraits. Sitting atop a sturdy neck, multiple versions of Cahun's face overlap one on top of the other. It is impossible to discern which face, if any, is truly Cahun. Framing this grouping in the lower left-hand corner is written in French a phrase translating to, "Under this mask, another mask. I will never be finished removing all these faces."[81] This phrase emphasizes Cahun's ability to shift and adopt all these different identities without ever resting on one final and fixed version of herself. Similar to James Ensor, the "painter of masks," this motif gave Cahun the liberty to assume and discard her identities at her will and not by the will of external forces. Despite the mask functioning to conceal the artists, both Ensor and Cahun found its value in its ability to bring about freedom.

The only self-portrait photograph that Cahun published, *Self-Portrait* (1930) (Fig. 19), was included in the April, 1930, edition of the Surrealist magazine *Bifur.* In this black-and-white self-portrait, Cahun's back is to the camera with her neck twisted to show her face in profile. With a shaved head, Cahun again presents herself outside conventional boundaries of gender. Surrealism as a movement was dominated by male artists and the female body was a predominant subject for their art. In most instances, the female body was highly eroticized and associated with the male fantasy, and male artists took desire as the point of departure to address the female body.[82] In this image, Cahun deemphasized her body, presenting a unisex or genderless conception of the self in sharp contrast to the eroticized feminine body that was pervasive in the art of the male surrealists. In doing so, Cahun's image has the power to open up a complex dialogue about gender and sexuality rather than engaging with the topics of Eros and male desire. By choosing to address self-representation in her self-portraits and autobiography, a

task rarely taken the male surrealists, Cahun further distinguishes herself from her contemporaries

While issues concerning gender are most easily discernable from Cahun's images, these were not the sole aspects of identity that she took up. Rosalind Krauss argues that when Cahun chose to change her name it not only had to do with gender identity, but also as an effort to strengthen her Jewish identity.[83] Although Schwob is a recognizably Jewish name, Cahun, the French form of Cohen, belongs to the rabbinical class among the Jews, thereby accentuating her Jewishness in a time of growing anti-Semitism.[84] In flaunting her Jewishness, an identity that was marginalized by society, Cahun exposed herself to danger and discrimination. However, it seems as though Cahun did not wince at the threat of danger as her political activism in 1944 had her arrested and condemned to death for terrorist activities during the Nazi occupation of the island of Jersey.[85] The war ended before the sentence could be carried out.

After resurfacing in the second half of the 20th century, the art and literature of Cahun has influenced many contemporary artists, such as Gillian Wearing, who explore issues of identity through gender and masking. Cahun's proposal of the instability of gender is still relevant in the 21st century, as conversations on the complexities of gender and sexuality continue. In demonstrating the fluidity of gender, Cahun's art further opens the door to question the validity of all fixed social categories. Finally, Cahun's self-portraits make up one of the earliest significant bodies of photographic self-portraits. While artists such as Ensor and Modersohn-Becker used photographs as a preliminary tool, Cahun found photography to be a viable method for self-representation as such. Although Cahun did not disclose why she preferred photography, one could imagine several advantages. Firstly, because photography is believed to convey honesty in its realism, it is particularly useful in creating an image that blurs the boundary between the real and imaginary.[86] Secondly, in the process of posing for the camera and the relative size of the finished product, photography has the potential of being a very intimate medium. There has been speculation that Cahun's self-portraits were taken by her partner Marcel Moore. One can imagine Cahun creating the mis-en-scène, dressing up, and posing for a photograph for her lover and artistic collaborator. Does this challenge the categorization of these works as a self-portrait? As discussed previously, Cahun referred to Moore as "l'autre moi," sharing a lifelong, inseparable relationship. With each being the other, the pair seem to come

together as one. Their collaboration in making these images exploring identity and self-representation does not threaten the status of these works as self-portraits.

Discussed in Chapter Three, Frida Kahlo created self-portraits that reveal the complexities of identity. Kahlo constructing many versions of herself in her life and in her art. For her paintings, she depicted aspects from her life but also turned towards literary, philosophical, political, and scientific sources to inform her as she examined the process of identity formation and the components of social identity.[87] Well-versed in various ontological debates, Kahlo was able to approach issues of identity from a critical standpoint and apply this knowledge to both her life and her art.[88] One theory that she promoted in her paintings was the general Freudian conception that various stages of childhood were crucial to identity formation.[89] With Freud's theories in mind, Kahlo created her Childhood Series between 1932 and 1938 that included works such as *My Birth* (1932).[90] Like Cahun, Kahlo's work addressed issues of social identity such as gender. Kahlo frequently engaged with traditional conceptions of femininity and the roles of wife and mother. Moreover, Kahlo's art explores gender and femininity more directly through the public exhibition of these works and Kahlo's celebrity status in general. Living in Mexico through a time of political turmoil, Kahlo and her on-again-off-again husband Diego Rivera fought on behalf of the Republicans during the Mexican Civil War and throughout their lives were parts of various Communist organizations and leagues.[91] Kahlo's commitment to the political and social causes of Mexico were so great that she claimed the year of the Mexican Revolution, 1910, to be her birth year, thus intertwining her birth with that of Modern Mexico.[92] Considering her engagement with political ideology and action, it seems fitting that Kahlo's self-portraits address aspects of social identity such as nationality, race, and ethnicity.

In 1931, Kahlo painted the double portrait *Frida and Diego Rivera* (Fig. 20). In this painting, Kahlo depicted herself next to her husband, assuming the conventional feminine role of the dutiful and doting wife. Rivera, the better-known painter at the time, holds his paintbrushes while Kahlo holds his hand. Kahlo showed herself in a traditional Tehuana dress, emphasizing both her feminine and national identity. As she traveled with Rivera, Kahlo began to gain attention for wearing these colorful Tehuana dresses and other eye-catching accessories. This painting was Kahlo's first to be exhibited publicly, shown in the *Sixth Annual Exhibition of the San Francisco Soceity of Women Artists* in June of 1931.[93] Over time, Kahlo became famous as the artist's wife rather than the artist herself and Rivera's work often overshadowed her own.

Kahlo addressed social, genealogical, and political aspects of identity formation in her painting *My Grandparents, My Parents and I* (1936) (Fig. 21). In this work, Kahlo explored her mixed identity, portraying her European and Mexican descent by illustrating her family tree as a schematic genealogical chart. In its composition, Kahlo deliberately imitated genealogical charts used by the Nazi Party to enforce racial codes described in the Nuremberg Laws. With many German ex-patriots living in Mexico, these charts would be kept by those who followed the Nuremberg Laws that promoted 'purity of blood.'[94] By adopting the format of the genealogical chart, Kahlo subverts the racist intentions associated with this iconography with her open annunciation of her 'mixed' blood and interracial identity.[95]

Placing her paternal grandparents over the ocean, Kahlo eluded to their European nationality while signaling her maternal grandparent's Mexican identity by their placement over soil.[96] Her father's head, positioned on the edge of land and sea, indicates his identity as an immigrant, positing him between the old and new world.[97] Kahlo rendered her parents by reproducing a photograph taken at their wedding and at the base of the tree she presented herself as a toddler holding the family ties.[98] Kahlo depicted herself in three instances of development, including the moment of her conception as a zygote, herself as a fetus inside her mother's womb, and herself as a toddler standing inside La Casa Azul positioning herself close to her father's heart.[99] Kahlo presented her family tree without portraying her many siblings that amounted to a complicated family dynamic. In this image, Kahlo claimed her heritage to the social groups of her ancestors, while simultaneously announcing herself as interracial. Modern Mexico was multi-cultural and multi-racial, and Kahlo's desire to proudly announce this aspect of her identity mirrored the demographic of the nation. In 1938, Kahlo exhibited this self-portrait at Julien Levy Gallery in New York in her debut solo exhibition.[100]

Before this exhibition, Kahlo wrote a letter to her friend Lucienne Bloch stating, "I have painted about twelve paintings, all small and unimportant, with the same personal subjects that only appeal to myself and nobody else… Four or five people told me they were swell, the rest think they are too crazy. To my surprise, Julian Levy wrote me a letter, saying that somebody talked to him about my paintings and that he was very much interested in having an exhibition in his gallery."[101] In this letter, Kahlo still appears to be developing her confidence as an artist while she still lived in the shadow of Rivera. As Kahlo was searching for her own artistic autonomy and unique style, she turned towards her personal experiences. Due to the personal

nature of many of Kahlo's works, critics of this exhibition and those who assessed her work later would often attempt to make sense her work purely by means of biographic analysis.[102] While Kahlo's paintings, most notably her self-portraits, were directly connected to events in her life, a simple biographic read is shortsighted and ignores Kahlo's ability to address issues of identity in general in her self-portraits.

Kahlo and Rivera's marriage was troubled by a series of tragedies and affairs. Kahlo was unable to bear a child and was undergoing intense physical and psychological pain from her miscarriages. In 1934, Kahlo discovered that Rivera was romantically involved with her younger sister Cristina.[103] Kahlo recognized that in trying to perform conventional roles of wife and mother she was tormenting herself and she left Rivera. At this time, Kahlo underwent a rethinking of her sense of self, deciding to no longer play the role of the artist's wife but assert herself as an artist in her own right.[104] In *Two Fridas* (1939) (Fig. 22) Kahlo presented two versions of herself, one version as a bride in a wedding dress and the other as a mother wearing a Tehuana dress. These two Fridas, with their exposed hearts and blood vessels, are joined by an artery and in hand. Kahlo's wedding dress, representative of her role as a wife, is adorned with bleeding flowers, referring to the defloration occurring with marriage.[105] Kahlo's Tehuana Frida represents her role as mother, a role which she failed to even assume after a series of miscarriages. Both Fridas bleed with open arteries, not flinching from the pain of the blood pouring out of their bodies. In Chapter Two, Kahlo's ability to translate her intense physical pain into art was explored. In this image, the long-endured emotional pain that Kahlo experienced while performing these conventional social identities is translated into painting. In 1940, the image was included in the *International Exhibition of Surrealism* organized by André Breton at the Galería de Arte Mexicano.[106] Unafraid to share her pain with the world, Kahlo's *Two Frida's* subverted conventional ideas of femininity to an international audience.

An even more dramatic rebellion against conventional ideas of femininity, Kahlo painted *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair* in 1940 (Fig. 23). Painted after Rivera demanded a divorce, Kahlo described the image as a reaction to the overwhelming feeling of hurt feminine pride that resulted from the event. Kahlo's cropped hair and masculine attire subvert conventional notions of gender and she appears androgynous.[107] Kahlo's hair, which she would do up in braids and with flowers to create complex, exotic coiffures, was often central to her construction of the identity of "La Mexicana."[108] By cutting her hair off, she truly rejected her former identity as the

traditional Mexican wife. Photographs from her teenage years show Kahlo dressed in male attire, revealing that this was not the first time Kahlo went against the status quo, reflecting her profound understanding of identity.[109] Kahlo often approached issues of identity in her self-portraits based in her personal experiences. However, she addresses these issues critically using a variety of sources. Despite exposing many personal aspects in these self-portraits, Kahlo's multi-layered self-portraits never fail to have further complexities to be explored.

The conceptual artist and philosopher Adrian Piper (1948) created works that experiment with themes of gender, race, class, and identity. The relationship of the self to the other is fundamental to Piper's practice, sometimes drawing upon the autobiographical self and other times referring to the self in general. Like many artists, especially those discussed in Chapter One, Piper first turned to self-portraiture as a way to confront and comprehend her self-existence. In 1971, Piper performed *Food for the Spirit* (Fig. 24), a performance and self-inquiry for which she stayed inside her loft fasting, doing yoga, and writing while reading Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.*[110] While performing this mentally and physically strenuous task, Piper constantly returned to the mirror to look at herself, sometimes photographing or recording herself in order to reassure her own self-existence which she felt was slipping away.[111] The stripping away of identity that took place in *Food for the Spirit* would allow for later interrogations of both personal and social identity.

In 1972, Piper created the *Mythic Being,* an alter-ego that was conceived of as an angry young male from a working-class background.[112] From 1973-1975, Piper created a series of works ranging from photographs, to works on paper, to performances as the Mythic Being. Dressed in a wig and moustache with her face covered in sunglasses, the character is a thin, and he seems to be a Hispanic or Black man. The *Mythic Being* (Fig. 25) transformation allowed Piper to investigate the male Other from her own perspective, experiencing the reactions society had to her character.[113] In her one of her performances as the Mythic Being, Piper remarks, "The idea is very much to see if there was a being who had exactly my history, only a completely different visual experience to the rest of society."[114] Further intertwining her own narrative with her alter-ego, Piper would often assemble images of the Mythic Being paired with speech bubbles from her own journals and diaries. While reflecting on her time in art school and pursuing degrees in philosophy, Piper described both blatant and discreet acts of racism and sexism from her peers and professors.[115] The Mythic Being became Piper's spokesperson as she

published works featuring her alter-ego in the *Village Voice*. In one such publication titled *I Embody Everything You Most Hate and Fear* (1975) (Fig. 26), the Mythic Being appears with a speech bubble with the title text that is identified with a white person's negative image or perception of blacks.[116] The Mythic Being was a way for Piper to play out different polarities that she observed, such as male and female and black and white.[117]

After Piper discontinued her the Mythic Being alter-ego, she began to create works that addressed questions of her identity more directly. In 1978, Piper created the series *Political Self Portraits.* In this series of three images, Piper reflected on memories from her childhood that influenced the way she came to understand aspects of her identity pertaining to race, sex, and class.[118] These three works on paper, featuring images overlaid with words, visualize Piper's journey of coming to know herself and establish a sense of identity.[119] In *Political Self-Portrait #2 (Race)* (Fig. 27)*,* Piper placed a black-and-white self-portrait of herself with a divide at her midline, with one side being the inverse color of the other. The text surrounding her self-portrait describes incidents central to her identity formation that pertained to her upbringing as a multiracial child. Reflecting on her childhood, Piper describes the experience of living in a black neighborhood in Harlem while attending a predominantly white private school.[120] "I would never simply say [I was] Black because I felt silly and as though I was co-opting something i.e., the Black Experience, which I haven't had," wrote Piper, "I've had the Gray Experience."[121] In her reflection on how her conception of her racial identity was solidified, Piper gave accounts of outright discrimination, such as an incident with a teacher, and more subtle instances, such as times when her schoolmates would remark on how white she looked. What stands out across the accounts given by Piper is that the moments that led to identity formation were brought about through interactions with others. More often than not, Piper seemed to be the passive actor in her stories, learning who she was from the world. For Piper, her artwork offered her a 'reflective conceptual tool' to consider both her personal experiences and the larger systems with which she is engaged.[122]

In *Political Self-Portrait #2 (Race)* Piper wrote about her experience of white classmate's disbelief of how white she looked and a black neighbor in Harlem teasing her for her lighter skin. As she progressed through her academic career, it was not uncommon for Piper to be mistaken as white by colleagues or classmates. When people would find out that Piper was mixed-raced, she describes their process of comprehension and their searching for signs that would point to the

fact that she was partially black. Piper writes, "Some of those, both black and white, who later become my friends, upon first meeting, peer closely at my face and figure, listen carefully to my idiolect and habits of speech, searching for the telltale stereotypical feature to reassure them. Finding none, they make some up: 'Ah,' they say, 'but of course your hair is wavy…' or, 'But the way you dance is unmistakable.'"[123] In 1981, Piper created the work *Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Negroid Features* (Fig. 28) in which she explored this aspect of her identity by imagining herself with physical features that reflected her black ancestry. She challenged people to see this part of her, pointing to the absurdity and arbitrariness of racial categories. This work, as well as her Mythic Being works and *Political Self Portrait* series, demonstrates the instability of socially generated classifications, undermining discrimination based on differences in race, sex, or class. Piper's work, while often being overtly autobiographical, has the ability to speak about the experiences of others.

Despite her appearance as a model in nearly every photograph, works by Cindy Sherman (1954) are not self-portraits. These works are so often mistaken to be self-portraits that Eva Respini, the curator of a major retrospective of Cindy Sherman's work in 2012 at the Museum of Modern Art, opened the exhibition catalogue with a declaration against that very notion.[124] Sherman jumpstarted her career as photographer in the 1970s in New York. Rising to popularity within the New York art scene early in her career, Sherman established herself as a young artist with the series titled *Untitled Film Stills*. This series has since become some of Sherman's most well-known works and established many of the principles she would use in the works to follow. In *Untitled Film Still #21* (1978) (*Fig. 29)* a young woman is seen against the backdrop of an unidentified city-scape. The woman looks out into the distance and her expression is ambiguous. Is she fearful, anxious, suspicious, or uncertain? One begins to wonders what she is looking at, who this woman might be, and why she appears so distressed. The character resembles an iconic Hitchcock blonde, a feature that is reinforced by the upward angle recalling camerawork reminiscent of films such as *Psycho* (1960) and *Vertigo* (1958). Other photographs in the 70 piece black-and-white series that make up the *Untitled Film Stills* series have a similar formula as *Untitled Film Still #21*.[125] In these photographs, Sherman explored different cliché female film roles poking fun at and criticizing various stereotypes. The model that Sherman used to explore these various stereotypes in *Untitled Film Stills* and for the vast majority of her body of work is herself. However, Sherman rarely looks the same in one image to the next. In *Untitled Film Still*

#28 (1979) (Fig. 30) the woman looks so unlike the character from *Untitled Film Still* #21 that you could hardly pin the model of both of them to be Sherman without close examination or prior knowledge.

Sherman constructs various female identities by use of costume, gesture, and photo-editing tools. With these devices, Sherman has carefully constructed and presented a multitude of various female identities. By shifting in and out of these different characters, Sherman questions the very nature of identity and presents the ideas that the individual is the author of their own identity and that identity is not fixed but fluid.[126] As the author and the model of the work, Sherman's photographs are subversive to male determination of female identity found in Hollywood and media culture. Throughout her oeuvre, Sherman does little to openly represent herself and acts only as the conduit for the many identities she adopts. Although she is the model, in presenting a multiplicity of varying feminine identities Sherman does more to preserve her anonymity than to reveal anything remotely personal. Unlike the previous artists, Sherman uses herself to explore identity in general without additionally constructing her personal identity. Sherman's works are not representative of herself, but rather represent an open possibility for the construction of many versions of female identity. Why would Sherman use herself as a model if she did not intend for these works to be self-portraits? Like many other artists Sherman used herself as a model for a very practical reason to avoid paying a model. Sherman also arranges her own hair, makeup, costumes, and sets for her images.[127] It is easier for Sherman to work by herself. Her role as model is synonymous with her role as photographer, make-up artist, and prop specialist that all contribute to achieving her artistic vision.

Ensor, Picasso, Cahun, Kahlo, Piper, and Sherman reveal in their self-portraits that the notions of the self and identity are anything but straightforward. Identity is always-changing and multiple-identities can be assumed. Identity is constructed in respect to society and in regards to one's development as an individual. One can take control of their identity and manipulate their appearance, but one cannot control how it is perceived by society. Searching for their own unique modes of expression, these artists even sought to assert an identity through their style, an aspect of their identity that may be one of the most fundamental. Whereas previous artists often sought to express their identity purely as a painter by rendering themselves in front of a canvas with a brush in hand, these artists have more to say about how they perceive themselves in the world.

Fig. 1, James Ensor, *Self-Portrait with a Flowered Hat (My Portrait Disguised)*, 1883/1888. Oil on canvas. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000711679

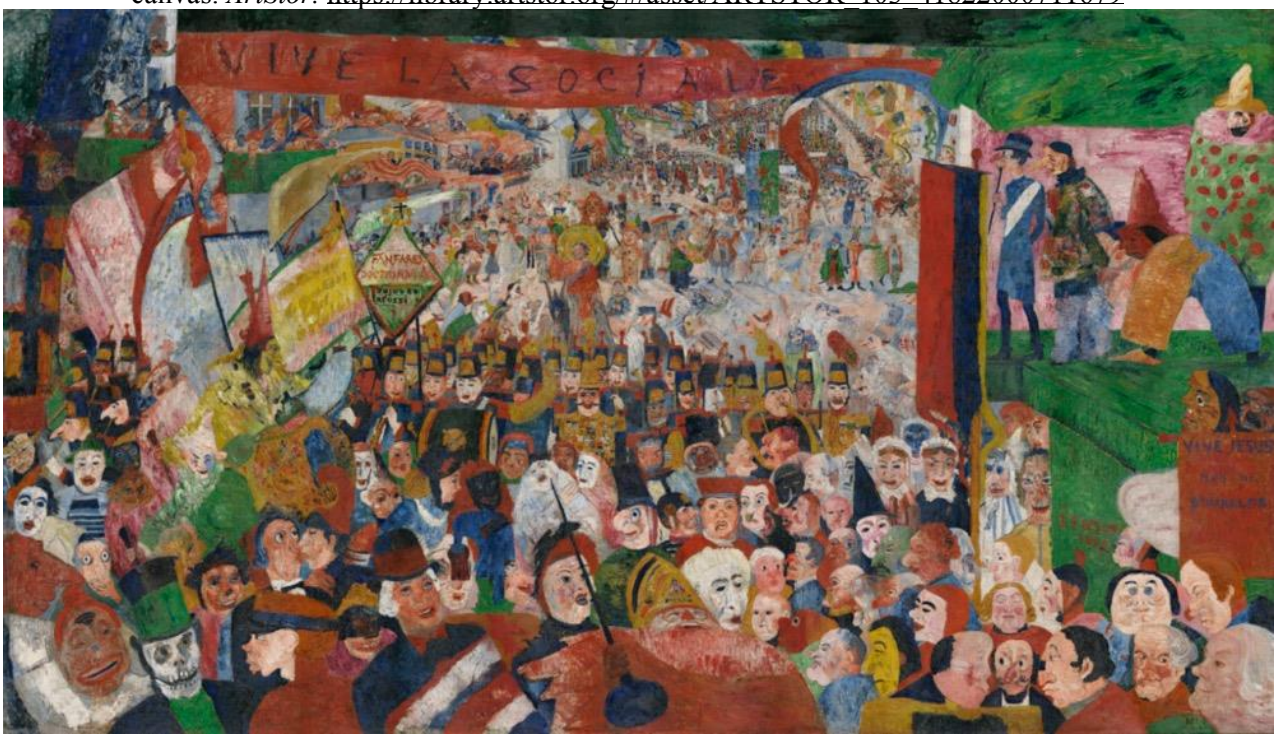

Fig. 2, James Ensor, *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889,* 1888.Oil on canvas. The J. Paul Getty Museum. http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/811/james-ensor-christ's-entry-into-brussels-in-1889-belgian-1888/

Fig. 3, James Ensor, *Calvary,* 1880-1886. Pencil, crayon, oil on paper. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822003882501

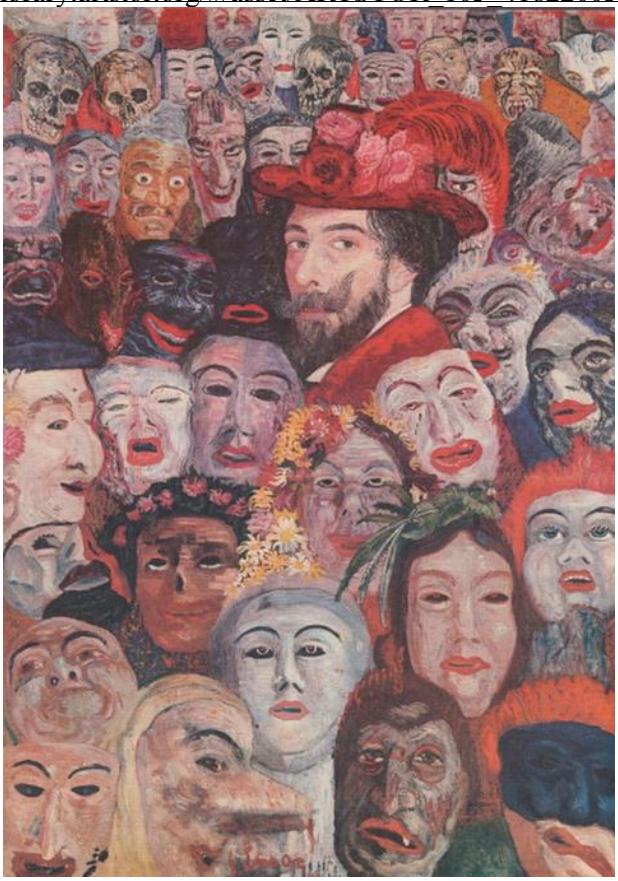
Fig. 4, James Ensor, *Self-Portrait with Masks,* 1899. Oil on canvas. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AWSS35953_35953_31704916.

Fig. 5, James Ensor, *Peculiar Insects (Des insects bizarres),* 1888. Drypoint. Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent. *ArtStor*. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ALUKASWEBIG_10313648936.

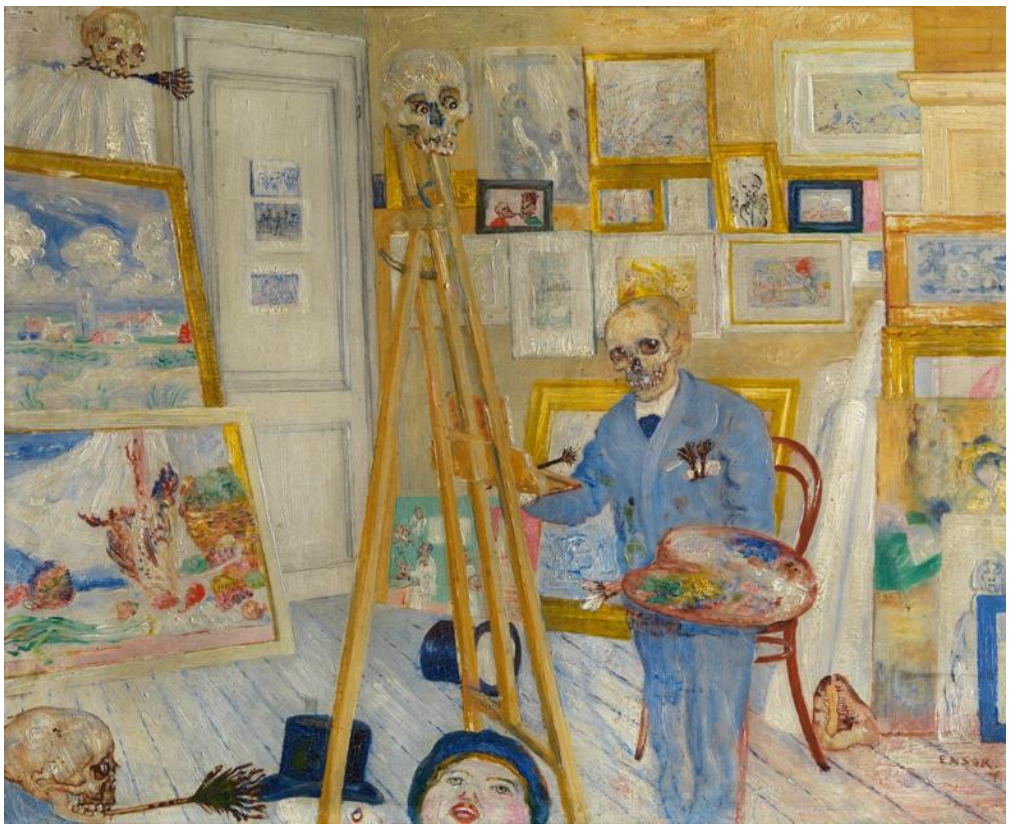

Fig. 6, James Ensor, The Skeleton Painter, 1896. Oil on canvas. Kninklijk Museum Voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen. *ArtStor*. *https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ALUKASWEBIG_10313648774*

Fig. 7, Pablo Picasso, *Self-Portrait in Front of the Moulin Rouge,* 1901. Ink, paper, and crayons. Private Collection. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/26172080.

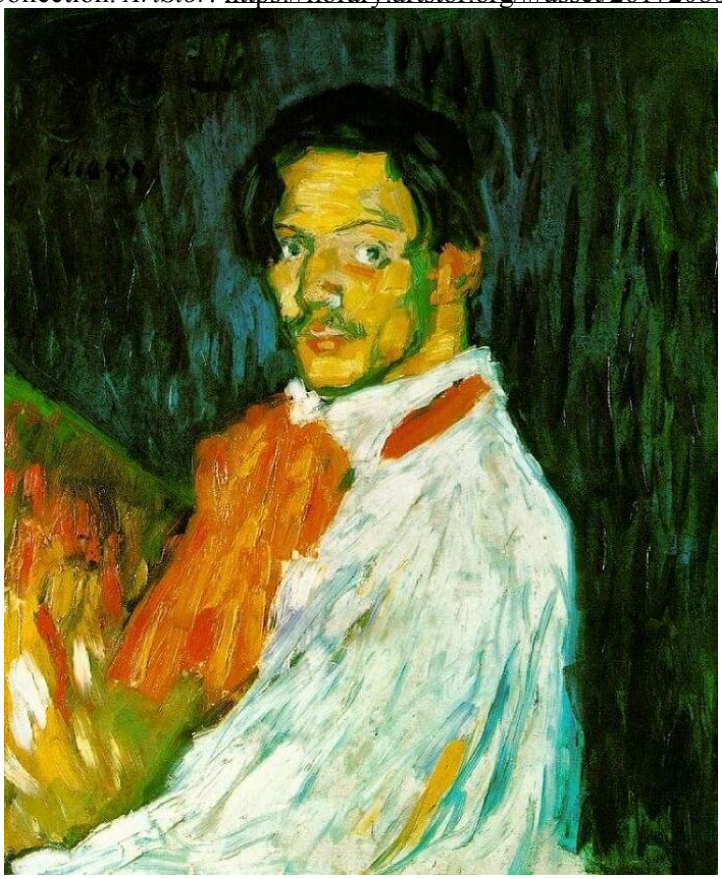

Fig. 8, Pablo Picasso, *Yo, Picasso,* 1901. Oil on canvas. *Picasso and Portraiture : Representation and Transformation*. New York: Museum of Modern Art : Distributed by Abrams, 1996.

Fig. 8, Pablo Picasso, *Self-Portrait in a Top Hat,* 1901. Oil paint, India ink, paper. Private Collection. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/HTRINITY_VR_103710082702

Fig. 9, Pablo Picasso, *Self-Portrait,* 1901. Oil on canvas. Musée Picasso. *ArtStor. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/HTRINITY_VR_10371008270*

Fig. 10. Pablo Picasso, *At the Lapin Agile,* 1905. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/486162.

Fig. 11, Pablo Picasso, Studies for *Self-Portrait with Palette,* 1906. Graphite on paper. Musée Picasso. https://www.navigart.fr/picassoparis/#/artwork/160000000000349?filters=authors%3APICASSO%20Pablo%E2%86%B9PICASSO%20Pablo,,year%3A111906%E2%86%B91906&page=2&layout=grid&sort=by_author

Fig. 12, Pablo Picaso. *Self-Portrait with Palette,* 1906. Oil on canvas. Philadelphia Museum of Art. *ArtStor*. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/HTRINITY_VR_103710082705.

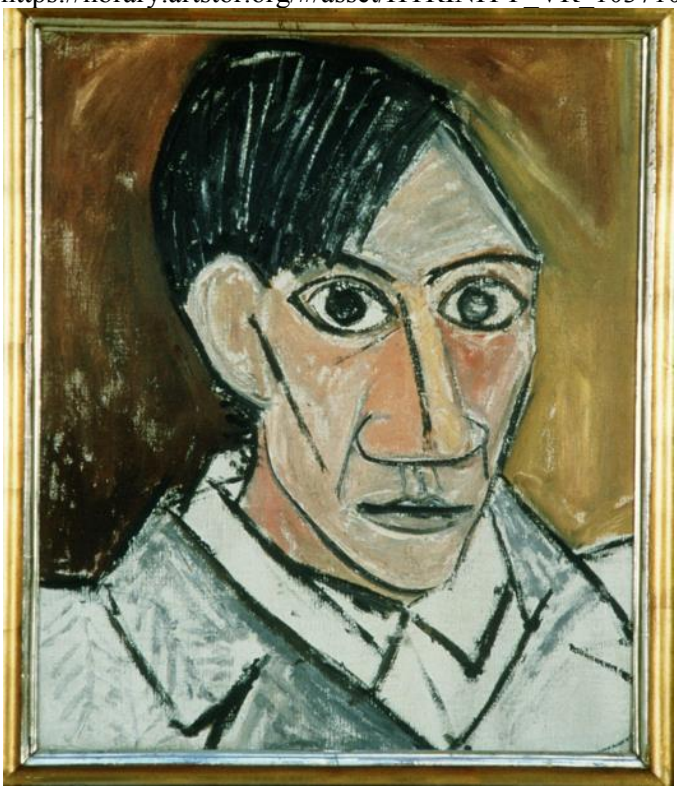

Fig. 13, Pablo Picasso, *Self Portrait,* 1907. Oil on canvas. National Gallery (Prague). *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/HTRINITY_VR_103710082929.

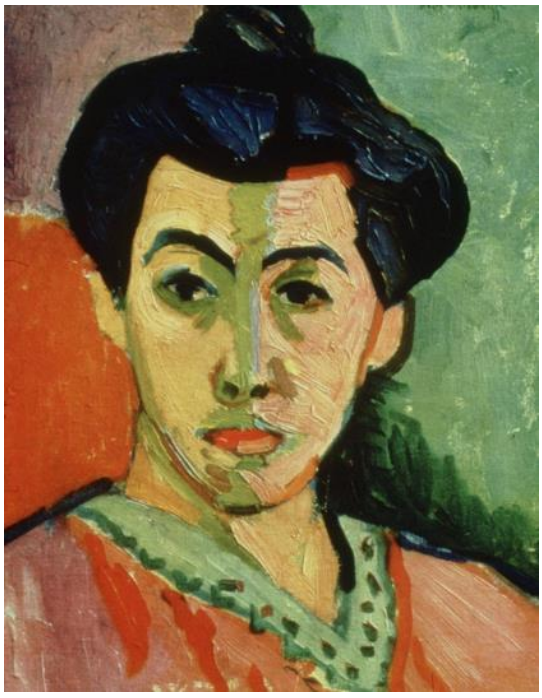

Fig. 14, Henri Mattise, *Portrait of Madame Matisse/ The Green Line,* 1905. Oil on canvas. Statens Museum for Kunst. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/HTRINITY_VR_103710083524.

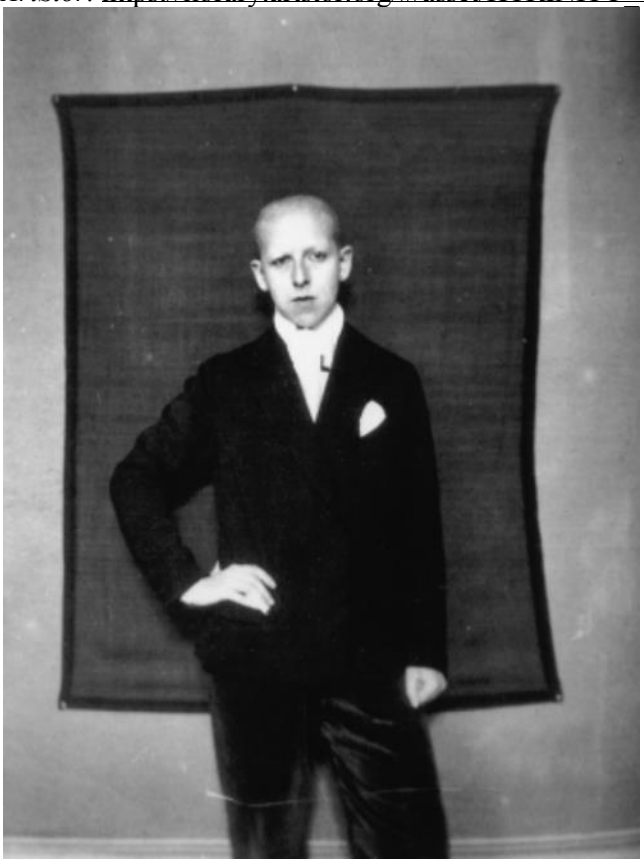

Fig. 15, Claude Cahun, *Self-Portrait,* ca. 1921. Photograph. Nabriskie Gallery, New York. Krauss, Rosalind E. *Bachelors*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999. 32.

Fig. 16, Claude Cahun, Self-Portrait, ca. 1927. Photograph. Krauss, Rosalind E. *Bachelors*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999. 36.

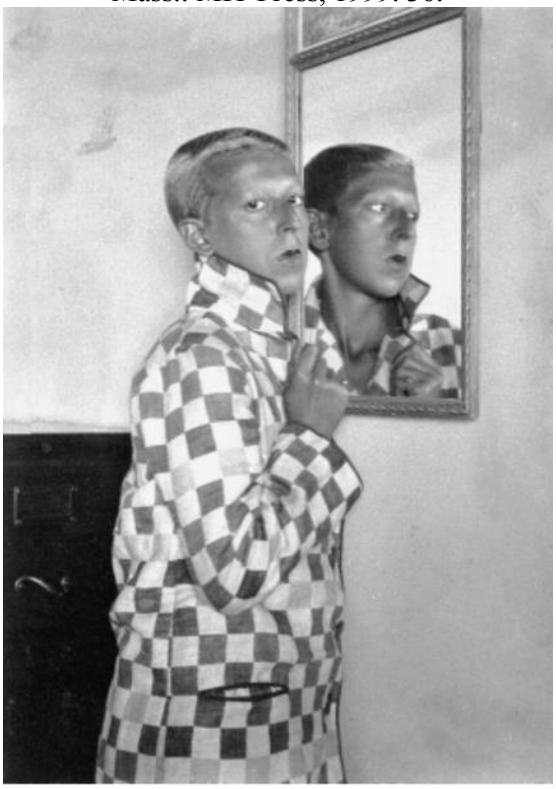

Fig. 17, Claude Cahun, *Self-Portrait,* 1928. Gelatin Silver Print. Musée des Beaux-Artes de Nantes. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARMNIG_10313261500.

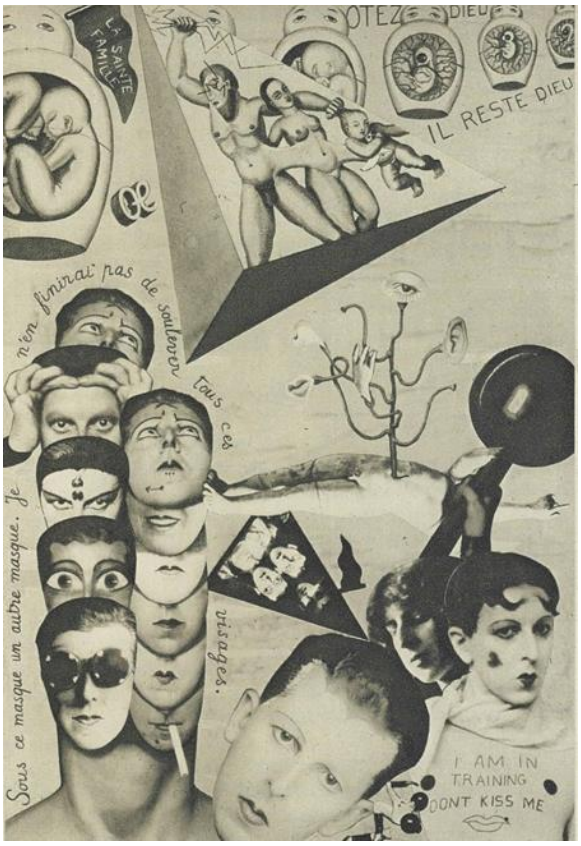

Fig. 18, Claude Cahun, Photomontage from *Cancelled Confessions,* 1930. *Inverted Odysseys: Claude Cahun, Maya Deren, and Cindy Sherman*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999.


Fig. 19, Claude Cahun, *Self-Portrait,* 1930. Silver print. Krauss, Rosalind E. *Bachelors*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999. 31.

Fig. 20, Frida Kahlo, *Frida and Diego Rivera,* 1931. Oil on canvas. San Francisco Museum of Art. *ArtStor. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ASFMOMAIG_10312704315*

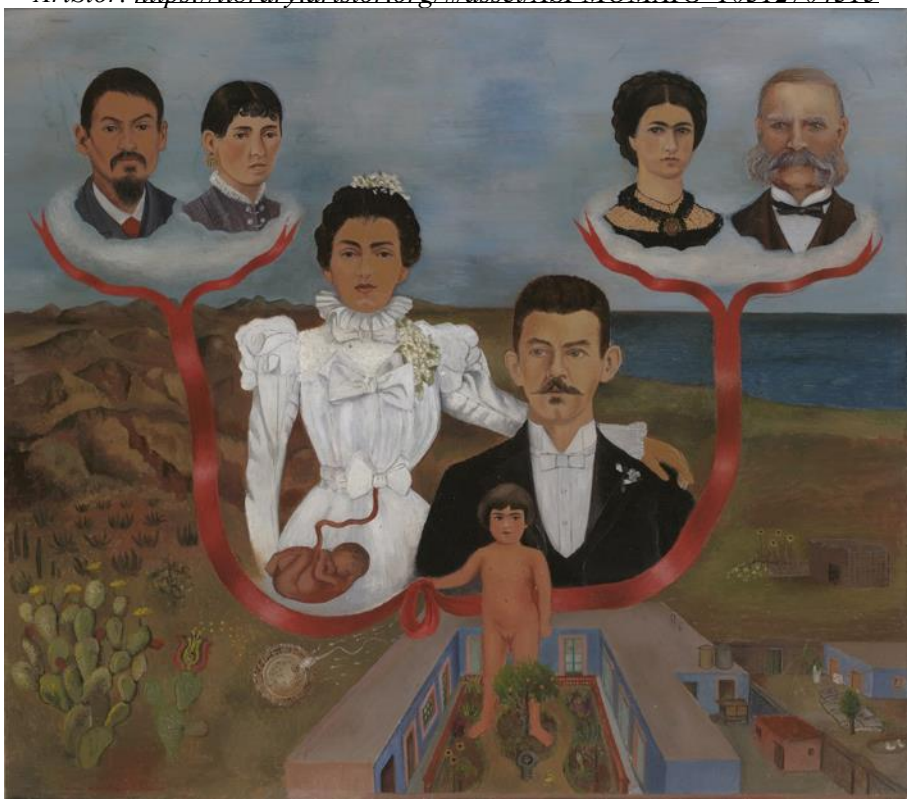

Fig. 21, Frida Kahlo, *My Grandparents, My Parents and I,* 1936. Oil and tempera on zinc. The Museum of Modern Art. *ArtStor. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AMOMA_10312310012*

Fig. 22, Frida Kahlo, *Two Fridas,* 1939. Oil on canvas. Museo de Arte Moderno. *ArtStor.* *https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ASCHALKWIJKIG_10313992050*

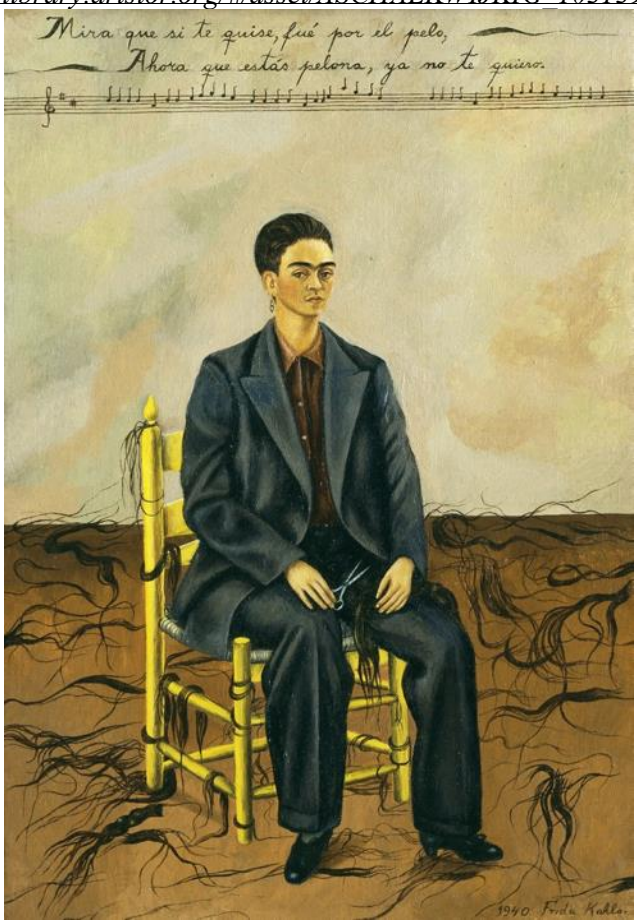

Fig. 23, Frida Kahlo, Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair, 1940. Museum of Modern Art. *ArtStor.* https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/HTRINITY_VR_103710079092.

Fig. 24, Adrian Piper, *Food for the Spirit,* 1971. Museum of Modern Art. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/52049

Fig. 25, Adrian Piper, *Mythic Being: Cruising White Women #1 of 3*. 1975. Photograph. *Artstor*. *https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822003618616*

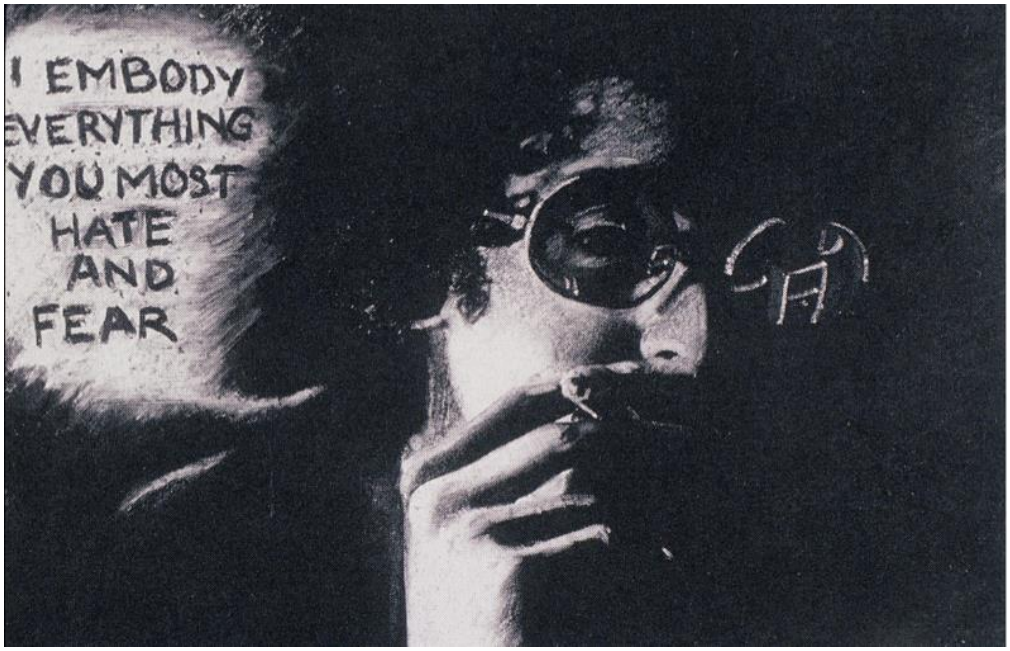

Fig. 26, Adrian Piper, *I Embody Everything You Most Hate and Fear,* 1975. Oil crayon drawing on photo. *ArtStor*. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/LARRY_QUALLS_1039762731.


My folks had to send me away to camp when I was five because they both had to wo
rk overtime that summer and didn't want to leave me alone in that hot apartment.
It was a girls' camp for the children of practicing Protestants called Camp Good
Hope. I had a friend named Karl who was sixteen and came from the boys' camp acr
oss the lake. He played catch and volleyball with me and took care of me and I a
dored him. I told someone that he was my big brother (I'm an only child) and she
said But that's impossible; Karl's white and you're colored. She said Colored. I
didn't know what she meant. Karl and I were pretty much the same color except th
at he had blue eyes. A few years later my mom thought it was time I started goin
g to and from school by myself instead of her taking me on the bus. The school w
as far away because it was not a local public school but rather an expensive pro
gressive prep school called New Lincoln where there were lots of rich mediocre w
hite kids and a few poor smart white kids and even fewer, poorer, even smarter b
lack kids. But all I knew then was that there sure was a difference between wher
e most of them lived (Fifth Avenue) and where I lived (Harlem). Anyway I started
going to school by myself and the neighborhood kids would waylay me as I was wal
king the two blocks from the bus stop to my house and would pull my braids and t
ease me and call me Paleface. By then I knew what they meant. No one at school e
ver called me Paleface. Once I was visiting one of my white classmates at her bi
g fancy apartment house on Central Park West where there were four doors into th
e house with a doorman standing at each and two separate elevators with an eleva
tor man for each and only one apartment on a floor and a cook and a maid and a c
leaning woman and a governess (!!). She said to her little brother I bet you can
't guess whether Adrian is white or colored. He looked at me for a long time and
very searchingly and said White. And she said You lose, she's colored, isn't tha
t a scream? I thought it was really a scream. I was afraid of the black kids on
my block because they bullied me and I was afraid of the black kids at school be
cause they made cutting remarks about my acting too white. But I wasn't afraid o
f the white kids because they were so stupid. Later when I was in fifth grade an
d getting sick alot and hating school I had a teacher named Nancy Modiano who re
ally bullied me. Once we all went on a hike and I became very thirsty and she wo
uldn't let me get any water. Then we went back to school and she forced me to fo
llow her around the school for four hours while she did her errands but wouldn't
let me stop at a water fountain for some water. When my mom came to pick me up I
was almost fainting. In conference with my parents she once asked them Does Adri
an know she's colored? I guess she must have thought I was too fresh and uppity
for a little colored girl. My folks were very upset and wanted to transfer me in
to another class but it was too near the end of the term. Nancy Modiano was one
of the few whites who overtly bullied me because of my color. The only others we
re white philosophy students later when I was in college who hated me and said Y
ou don't have to worry about graduate school; a black woman can get in anywhere,
even if she looks like you. But as I got older and prettier white people general
ly got nicer and nicer, especially liberals. I was very relieved when my folks m
oved out of Harlem when I was fourteen, and into a mixed neighborhood on Riversi
de Drive because there we weren't so conspicuous, and besides the boys in my old
neighborhood were no longer pulling out my braids when I passed them on the str
eet. In my new neighborhood I hung out with a Puerto Rican gang that accepted me
pretty well and taught me to curse in Spanish. I didn't see New Lincoln people v
ery much because they were growing into boring and neurotic people and were real
ly getting into being rich. But I made other friends when I started going to the
Art Students' League and Greenwich Village. I noticed that all my friends were w
hite and that I didn't have much in common with the children of my parents' very
light-skinned, middle class, well-to-do black friends. They seemed to have a ver
y determined self-consciousness about being colored (they said Colored) that I d
idn't share. They and many of my relatives thought it a scandal that I went out
with white men. I felt just as alienated from whites as blacks, but whites made
me feel good about my looks rather than apologetic. When someone asked me why I
looked so exotic I would either say I'm West Indian (my mother's Jamaican) or if
they looked really interested I would go on at length about my family tree: how
my mother's family is English, Indian from India and African, and how there's a
dispute about my father's family which my grandmother told me about before she d
ied because there are now two branches of the Piper family, the rich ones who no
w live in Chicago and founded the Piper Aircraft Company and the poor ones, i.e.
us, how they were originally a single English family who settled in the South bu
t at some point split up and disowned each other (i.e. the rich ones disinherite
d the poor ones) because the poor ones publicly admitted to being partly descend
ed from the slaves who worked on their plantation and the rich ones didn't want
to acknowledge any African blood in the family; but how for the poor ones it was
a matter of honor after the Civil War not to pass for white. But I would never s
imply say Black because I felt guilty and as though I was coopting something, i.e
the Black Experience, which I haven't had. I've had the Gray Experience. Also I
felt guilty about unjustifiedly taking advantage of justified white liberal guil
t. But I would never deny that I am black because I understand how it can be a m
atter of pride and honor for my folks to positively affirm their heritage and I
don't want to deny a part of myself that I'm proud of. But sometimes I wonder wh
y I should be caught in this bind in the first place; why I should have to feel
dishonest regardless of whether I affirm or deny that I'm black; and whether I,
middle-class, and all such upside down being victimized by a white racist schemo
e that forces us to accept an essentially alien and alienating identity that ar
bitrarily groups us with the most oppressed and powerless segment of the society
(blacks) in order to avoid having that segment gradually infiltrate and ta
ke over the sources of political and economic power from whites through the de f
acto successful integration of which we hybrids are the products and the victima
tion. Thinking about that I realize that in reality I've been bullied by whites as
well as blacks for the last three hundred years. And there is no end in sight.

Political Self-Portrait #2 © Adrian Piper June 1978

Fig., 27, Adrian Piper, *Political Self-Portrait #2 (Race)*, 1978. *ArtStor*. *https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822003600952*

Fig. 28, Adrian Piper, *Self-Portrait Exaggerating my Negroid Features,* 1981. Pencil drawing on paper. *ArtStor. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/LARRY_QUALLS_1039762836*

Fig. 29, Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #21,* 1978. Photograph. *ArtStor. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/LARRY_QUALLS_10310740386*

Fig. 30, *Untitled Film Still #28,* 1979. Photograph. . *ArtStor.* *https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/LARRY_QUALLS_10310740386*

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7 Ibid., 15.
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9 Todts, 'Make Way for the Old Ones!" 126.
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14 Ibid., 114.
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16 Hall, 235.
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18 Ibid., 22.
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20 Panetta, "Ensor: A Theater of Matter," 198.
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[92] Lowe, "Facsimile of The Diary of Frida Kahlo," 288.
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[94] Ankori, 40.
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[112] Farver, "Introduction," 4.

[113] Ibid., 4.
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[118] Ibid., 9.
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[121] Ibid., 4.
[122] Piper, "Flying," 30.
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[124] Eva Respini, *Cindy Sherman* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012), p.12)
[125] Eva Respini, *Cindy Sherman* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012), p. 20er
[126] Ibid., p. 13
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Photograph of Pablo Picasso in his studio at Montparnasse dressed in workman's clothes, 1915. *ArtStor*. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000810745

Conclusion

In their self-portraits, modern artists entered into an inquiry of the self and the nature of identity. This inquiry, a pursuit of self-knowledge, often reveals that identity is multifaceted and exists in multiplicity. Meditations on the self found in self-portraiture can lead us closer to what it means to be an individual. One aspect of individuality that was elucidated in this paper was the complex relationship between the individual and society. Even in the most subjective works of art this relationship can be found.

As it is the case that the individual lives in society, the circumstances for self-reflection are culturally conditioned. Modern artists were able to enter into such elaborate explorations of identity because they no longer produced works of art exclusively within academic systems or as commissioned by patrons. The relative autonomy of artists such as Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Edvard Munch allotted them the freedom to take up the self as a subject according to their own formal rules. The emergence of the nude self-portrait pioneered by Paula Modersohn-Becker and Egon Schiele owed itself to the new social context for artists at the turn of 20th century and changing cultural attitudes towards the body and sexuality. Certain aspects of identity exist or are brought to light only through interaction with society. Artists like Picasso formed social identities, creating the image of himself as the artiste-peintre par excellence and the worker-painter. Self-portraits, like that of Claude Cahun, show that aspects of identity are malleable, and one can simultaneously assume many identities. In society, a failure to recognize that identity exists in such multiplicity can be detrimental. Adrian Piper's self-portraits comment on the role of prejudice and discrimination based on a single aspect of an individual's identity that fails to recognize the complex nature of the individual.

Cindy Sherman's photographs represent a changing attitude towards the role of the artist. Although they are not self-portraits, Sherman uses herself as a model to engage topics of identity. By engaging with issues of identity through self-portraiture, the artists that preceded Sherman uncovered aspects of individuality and identity so artists that later artists could use these principles to question issues of culture and society more broadly. Society itself exists as a complex network of relations between individuals. In order to enter into a discourse on society, one must first inquire into the nature of the individual. Many artworks that deal with issues of identity that fall outside the genre of self-portraiture began to emerge in the 1960s and '70s, a

time that is situated at the tail end of this project. Future work on the topic of modern self-portraits could examine artists who engaged with identity in other genres. Alternatively, this project could be extended by looking at the self-portraits that preceded the scope of this project.

Inquiries into the nature of identity and the relationship between the individual and society have been widely discussed for many centuries. In the modern period, artists were able to explore this question with more freedom than ever before. With more freedom comes more choices. As the conclusion of this project drew near, I decided to put myself into the shoes of the artists that I had been looking at over the past year. Who am I? Like this thesis, the hard part was not deciding what I was going to do, but how I was going to do it. Posing is uncomfortable and awkward. Should I flatter myself, or should I be brutally honest? Painting or photograph? What else should I include in my self-portrait besides myself? Partial or full-body? When the work isn't coming together quite right, it is even more noticeable and frustrating than other genres. Even more difficult than making a self-portrait, is sharing it. The act of creating a self-portrait has been deeply personal. "Who am I?" is a timeless question, and a human question, that will remain relevant for artists to come over centuries to follow.

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